

U.S. expects better Saudi cooperation

WASHINGTON (R) — The United States expects Saudi Arabia to cooperate with the investigation into the bombing that killed 19 American troops in that country, U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright said on Sunday. She said on NBC Television's "Meet the Press" programme that there was no disagreement with the Clinton administration regarding critical statements about Saudi cooperation from Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) Director Louis Freeh and Attorney General Janet Reno. "The FBI is in charge of this investigation," Ms. Albright said. "The Saudis have been cooperative, Mr. Freeh has asked for additional information. The Saudis have assured us at the highest levels that they will be cooperative, and we expect them to be cooperative. Mr. Freeh is in charge. There is a unified position within the United States government, and it is very important to us that this be resolved."

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Abducted Jordanian released in Beirut

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — A Jordanian detained in Lebanon since early January has been released and is in good health, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs announced Sunday. A ministry statement carried by the Jordan News Agency, Petra, said the Jordanian embassy in Beirut had sent a cable to Amman informing that Darrar Karmi, 39, was released Sunday evening. The statement added that Mr. Karmi was resting at home and was in good health. Mr. Karmi, financial controller of the Beirut Marriott Hotel, was taken away by Syrian intelligence agents on Jan. 3 and was not heard of since then. The Jordanian government had filed two formal representations to the Beirut government seeking information on his whereabouts, and officials said early Saturday they were still awaiting a response from the Lebanese authorities. Agency France Presse quoted Mr. Karmi's father in Amman as saying that he was very happy that his son was released. It also quoted Mr. Karmi's wife as saying: "He's resting, he is sleeping."

House votes to maintain one-person, one-vote system after heated debate

1993 temporary election law endorsed with 51 votes for, 21 against and 4 abstentions

AMMAN — The long-running debate over whether Jordan should maintain or discard the one-person, one-vote formula according to which the last parliamentary elections were held came to a head Sunday when the Lower House of Parliament voted overwhelmingly to retain it. At the end of the House's most heated meeting in its current and last session, 51 deputies voted in favour of the amended Election Law for 1993 which the government issued as a temporary legislation before the election of the 12th Parliament; 21 deputies opposed it, four abstained and four were absent. The controversial law replaced the bloc-voting formula with the one person, one-vote system and was immediately rejected by the opposition as an unconstitutional mechanism that was aimed at weakening its presence in Parliament. But yesterday's endorsement of the draft law against the recommendation of the House's Judiciary Committee seems to have given the government the blessing for maintaining the one-person, one-vote formula in the new election law which Prime Minister Abdul Karim Kabariti pledged the government will eventually draft. The House voted on the draft law after about 30 deputies expressed their views on it, with opposition lawmakers launching one of their fiercest campaigns over the legislation. Opposition deputies said the draft law discriminates among Jordanians, was tailor-made to reduce opposition strength in the House, and weakens national unity and coherence of the tribes. But centrist deputies joined Mr. Kabariti in rejecting these charges and defending the law as one that has "guaranteed justice" and given people the chance to elect their representatives in a democratic way. But the debate over the draft law got out of hand after a verbal fight between Islamist Deputy Abdullah Akaleh and Christian lawmakers Bassam Haddadin and Farah Al Rabadi, prompting House Speaker Sa'd Hayel Spour to suspend the session. Deputy Haddadin said that if the quota for minorities in the election law was to be terminated, political parties based on religious ideologies should be banned so that people can elect their representatives on purely political considerations. But Deputy Ahmed Kufabi, a member of the Islamic Action Front, said the views of Mr. Haddadin were unconstitutional, saying that Islam was the religion of the state and the IAF was licensed by the state. At that point, Deputy Rabadi said "we will establish a Christian party," which drew an angry reaction from Dr. Akaleh, who accused Dr. Rabadi of promoting sectarianism and bombarding him with verbal insults. The two deputies almost clashed physically had it not been for the intervention of their colleagues. But the session resumed after the two deputies reconciled in the office of Mr. Spour and in the presence of Mr. Kabariti. Addressing lawmakers after the session resumed, IAF spokesman Hamzeh Mansour said: "The people have condemned the draft law because of the danger it poses and because it had stripped off democracy from its substance."

King leaves hospital after minor surgery

AMMAN (J.T.) — His Majesty King Hussein left Al Hussein Medical Centre Sunday afternoon after undergoing a minor surgery on his left knee. The King's personal physician, Dr. Samir Farraj, said a cartilage "which caused intense pain" was removed from the King's knee on Saturday. Dr. Farraj said the King, 61, enjoyed excellent health and will resume his activities very shortly. Dr. Farraj said the surgery was performed by arthroscopy, involving use of a fiber optic device for diagnosis and minor surgery. "We looked at the joint and pulled out the cartilage that was causing severe pain in the left knee," he told the Associated Press. Jordan Television reported that Palestinian President Yasser Arafat telephoned the King to congratulate him over the successful surgery.



Kabariti says King's Saudi visit was highly successful

AMMAN (Petra) — Prime Minister Abdul Karim Kabariti on Sunday described His Majesty King Hussein's recent visit to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the King's talks with King Fahd Ben Abdul Aziz of Saudi Arabia as successful and constructive. In a statement to the Al Sharq Al Awsat newspaper, Mr. Kabariti said the King's visit to Saudi Arabia provided a good opportunity for both leaders to discuss bilateral cooperation in the various fields, adding that it came within the context of the brotherly relations between both countries. The prime minister, who accompanied the King on the visit, praised King Fahd's efforts to support Arab and Islamic causes, and voiced Jordan's appreciation to King Fahd's supportive role. Mr. Kabariti said the forthcoming visit to Jordan by Saudi Foreign Minister Saud Al Faisal, due to take place after the Eid Al Fitr, will contribute to further enhancing the strong relations between the two countries and to building them on solid and firmer bases, capable of promoting collective Arab action.

Israeli police launch probe that could topple Netanyahu government

TEL AVIV (Agencies) — Israeli police launched a criminal investigation Sunday into allegations of government corruption and conspiracy which several ministers said could topple Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. State Prosecutor Edna Arbel said police would investigate the allegations centring on charges Mr. Netanyahu nominated a close associate as attorney-general earlier this month as part of a deal to save a key political ally from conviction on bribery charges. Ms. Arbel also said she would demand that Israel Television, which broke the story last week, hand over its material to police. If the station refuses, Ms. Arbel said she would consider filing a lawsuit against the station and its reporter, Ayala Hasson, to force them to turn over the material and possibly reveal Ms. Hasson's sources. "The circumstances detailed in the report and the alleged suspicions it raises, indicate there is a supreme national interest in the exposure of most of the material upon which the report was based," Ms. Arbel said in a statement. "The revelation is also important for removing and dispelling any suspicions against those not involved."

Israel approves plan to strengthen hold on Arab East Jerusalem

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (Agencies) — A committee led by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu approved on Sunday a multi-million dollar development plan designed to strengthen Israel's jurisdiction in Arab East Jerusalem, officials said. Israel Radio also reported that the \$43 million project, recommended by Jerusalem's Israeli mayor, Ehud Olmert, includes establishing a Jewish neighbourhood in the Har Homa area, partially located in the eastern section of the city. An Israeli spokeswoman said the plan includes "the development of roads, building schools and new classrooms, along with water and sewer systems" in the Arab sector over the next four years. She would not comment on whether Sunday's decision included a green light for the Har Homa project, which has been on the municipal government's drawing board for several years. The plan to build thousands of housing units in Har Homa has already raised angry opposition from Palestinians. Work on the new housing is not expected to begin until late this year and still requires a final stamp of approval from the city's planning committee. The plan approved on Sunday also calls for the transfer of government offices from the Jewish, western section of the city to East Jerusalem. Jerusalem's 165,000 Palestinians accuse the Israeli municipality of discrimination in its allocation of funds. The new projects for East Jerusalem are part of a greater \$130 million plan by Mr. Olmert to strengthen infrastructure throughout all of the city. The government committee on Jerusalem affairs includes the defence, foreign and several other ministers.

Rubinstein nominated

A RENOWNED Israeli judge who played a key role in Arab-Israeli peace talks has been nominated as the country's new attorney general. Justice Minister Tzahi Hanegbi put forward Eliakim Rubinstein for the job. The nomination, disclosed by the justice ministry on Sunday, will have to be ratified next week by the government, but the choice of Mr. Rubinstein has already been welcomed by the opposition Labour and left-wing Meretz parties.

Arafat arrives today

AMMAN (Petra) — Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat will arrive in Amman today on an official visit during which he will hold talks with His Majesty King Hussein on bilateral economic and trade relations as well as the latest developments in the peace process.

Sudan claims military success after disputed assault against rebels

KHARTOUM (AFP) — The Sudanese army has clashed with rebels who have taken over part of the east of the country and was still planning a "general offensive" to kick them out of Sudan, officials said here. Sudan also said 300 Ethiopian soldiers were killed in the clashes. Rebels denied to AFP that any such clash had taken place. Ali Magid, an official in the Roseires region of the Blue Nile state, on the Ethiopian border, told television Sunday that "the raids against the Tigreans have managed to reduce their presence on the border."

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Juppe: France is evenhanded in Mideast

PARIS (R) — Prime Minister Alain Juppe insisted to leaders of France's Jewish community on Saturday that Paris was not biased in favour of the Arab stance in the Middle East conflict.

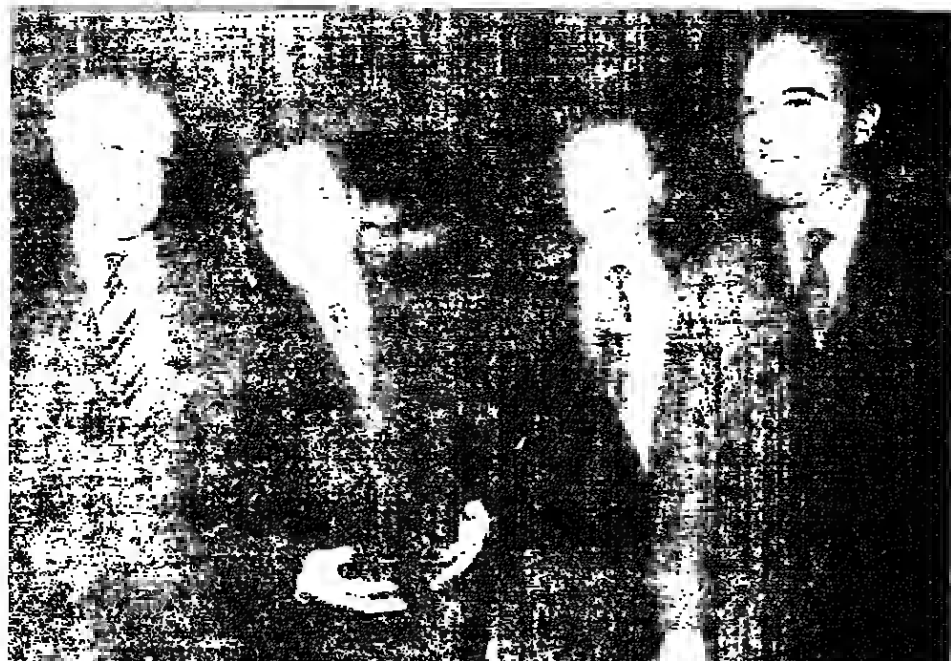
"French positions are not always well understood and there have been accusations, which you have just echoed, that our policy is biased in favour of one side (the Arabs) rather than the other," Mr. Juppe said.

"But that is not the case. France's only bias is in favour of peace," Mr. Juppe said at a traditional annual banquet at which serving prime ministers address leaders of the 750,000-strong Jewish community.

Mr. Juppe had just heard Henri Hajdenberg, president of CRIF, the umbrella body for French Jewish groups, tell him, and several hundred other guests, that France's Mideast policy was "unbalanced, incomprehensible and clumsy."

"I regret to say that official France seems to give the impression it has chosen its camp," Mr. Hajdenberg said.

He singled out President Jacques Chirac's conduct during a Middle East tour in October when he publicly clashed with Israeli officials.



Henri Hajdenberg (second right), president of the Representative Council of France's Jewish Associations (CRIF), welcomes French Prime Minister Alain Juppe (right), former Israeli Foreign Minister Ehud Barak (second left) and French Socialist Party First Secretary Lionel Jospin (left) at the traditional CRIF dinner of the year on Saturday. (Reuters photo)

Mr. Juppe backed the right of self-determination for Palestinians and the principle of exchanging land for peace which rightist Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu favours upon.

"If we sometimes seem to demand so much from Israel, it is because Israel is so close to us," Mr. Juppe said.

Commentators noted that, with crucial general elections just over a year away, Mr. Juppe was accompanied by half a dozen cabinet ministers, including Foreign Minister Hervé de Charette.

Lionel Jospin, head of the opposition Socialist Party, said.

Mr. Juppe assured appreciative listeners that his Gaullist Rally for the Republic (RPR) party would ban its candidates from any election-time alliance, even tacit, with Jean-Marie Le Pen's extreme-rightist National Front Party, bogeyman to French Jews.

In what he described as a "national duty," he also promised that the government would investigate allegations that some goods, mostly flats or artworks, confiscated by occupying Nazis or local collaborators from murdered Jews in World War II were still in government hands.

Many foreign ambassadors were present. Eyes popped when Palestinian envoy Leila Shahid walked over for a long, friendly chat with retired Israeli general and ex-foreign minister Ehud Barak, now visiting France. Mr. Barak, a leading Labour Party figure, is widely regarded as a challenger for Mr. Netanyahu's job.

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Ex-minister to seek Iranian presidency

TEHRAN (AFP) — Former Culture and Islamic Guidance Minister Mohammad Khatami will be the moderate candidate in July presidential elections in Iran, the Salam newspaper reported Sunday.

The paper said that Mr. Khatami would be the choice of the radical left and moderate factions within the ruling Shiite Muslim fundamentalist regime.

The paper said the moderate Servants of Construction group, the Islamist Coalition of Groups in the Path of the Imam and the radical Association of Militant Clergymen had all backed 59-year-old Khatami's candidacy.

The radical left and moderates consider themselves closer to the beliefs of the founder of the Islamic republic, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, and favour more tolerance on cultural and social issues than the virulently anti-Western conservative clergy.

Mr. Khatami held the ministerial portfolio between 1982 and 1992, but was forced to resign after repeatedly coming under fire from the conservative clergy over his softer line towards the West on cultural issues.

The conservative candidate for the presidency is 53-year-old Parliament Speaker Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, who has the support of the influential clergy in the Holy City of Qom in central Iran.

The only other politician to have officially declared his candidacy is former Intelligence Minister Mohammad Reza Jahromi, who is considered a hardliner.

Mr. Jahromi has said that he would run on a platform to promote Islamic values and fight Western cultural inroads as well as "rampant" bureaucratic corruption.

But he is unlikely to pose a challenge to Mr. Rafsanjani, who is close to paramount leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and has the backing of the conservative-majority parliament.

President Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani will have served two four-year terms and is barred from seeking a third mandate under the constitution.

His moderate supporters lobbied hard for an amendment to the law to enable Mr. Rafsanjani to run again, but they faced stiff opposition from the conservative camp, headed by Mr. Naeq-Nuri.

The conservatives beat a coalition of moderates and left-wingers close to Mr. Rafsanjani in the legislative polls in March last year, which was seen as a dress rehearsal for the presidential elections.

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NEWS IN BRIEF

Levy may visit Turkey in February

ANKARA (AFP) — Israeli Foreign Minister David Levy will "very probably" visit Turkey in February, the Anatolia news agency reported Sunday, without giving specific dates. The visit, at the invitation of Turkish Foreign Minister Tansu Ciller, will be the first by an Israeli minister since pro-Islamic Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan came to power last July. In opposition, Mr. Erbakan had used tough rhetoric against what he called the "Zionist" policies of the Jewish state, but relations between the two countries have not deteriorated during the new leader's term in office. In an interview published Thursday with the Istanbul-based liberal daily Milliyet, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said he was very pleased with relations with the new government. "We have no concerns or fears on the future of ties between Israel and Turkey. On the contrary, we believe we will further develop our relations," Mr. Netanyahu said. In early December, Mr. Erbakan approved a \$600-million deal with Israel to modernise 56 Turkish army F-4 fighter-bombers. A few days before that, the two countries signed a military cooperation programme for 1997 as part of a framework agreement signed the previous year which envisaged training flights by pilots from both countries and the exchange of personnel and information. That accord sparked anger in Arab countries, particularly Turkish neighbours Syria and Iran.

Tehran area threatened with water shortages

TEHRAN (AFP) — Iranian authorities have set up a crisis centre to fight water shortages in the Tehran area in coming months because a lack of precipitation has caused water reserves to decline, an official said Sunday. Water Organisation chief Mohsen Nariman said: "Tehran's water reserves dropped considerably this winter because of a lack of rain and snow." About 12 million people live in the Tehran area where more than 80 per cent of the water comes from three dams. The dams' water there has fallen to its lowest level in weeks. "To face this shortage, we must use deep wells and the water table in the Tehran area," Mr. Nariman said, adding that "water will have to be rationed next summer." According to official statistics, the average Iranian consumes about 300 cubic metres of water a year, while the per capita world average is 150 cubic metres. Except for some mountainous areas, a large portion of the Iranian plateau has not seen any rain or snow this winter, and the mountains north of Tehran, whose streams feed the capital's areas, are still dry for the most part.

Iraq attacks Britain for Kurdistan visit

BAGHDAD (AFP) — Iraq on Sunday attacked Britain and Turkey after British diplomats based in Ankara travelled to Kurdish-held northern Iraq. "We denounce Britain for sending its diplomats into the region of Salahuddin and Erbil, and we consider this act as a violation of our sovereignty," the official Al-Thawra newspaper said. "We put full responsibility on Turkey for having allowed the diplomats to cross the border without the green light from the Iraqi government." The newspaper said, "It is not the right of any other country to violate Iraq's sovereignty," the paper said. Iraq withdrew from its northern territory after a Kurdish revolt in 1991, but regained a foothold there at the end of August when it helped a Kurdish faction capture territory from a rival group. The Iraqi National Congress (INC), a London-based umbrella group for the opposition, said that a British embassy delegation from Ankara travelled to Iraqi Kurdistan on Jan. 19. The delegation, which visited the cities of Erbil and Sulaymaniyah, met Kurdish officials and other INC delegates.

198 kg of heroin seized in Turkey

ANKARA (AFP) — Turkish police have seized 198 kilograms of heroin from a vehicle in southeastern Turkey, Anatolia news agency reported Sunday. The heroin, with an estimated value of \$17.4 million, had come from Iran and was due to be delivered to Istanbul, the agency said. It did not say when the operation took place. One person, the driver of the vehicle, was arrested.

Saudi convicted spared beheading

JEDDAH (AFP) — A Saudi sentenced to death for murder was spared from decapitation after his victim's family pardoned him, a newspaper said Sunday. The victim's family told a judge that it pardoned the murderer and even refused the blood money which is usually offered in exchange for clemency. Okaz newspaper said. Under Islamic law governing the kingdom, the father of the victim or one of his heirs can grant clemency.

Iraqi exiles reject that they under pressure in Jordan

AMMAN (J.T.) — Iraqi dissidents living in Jordan have denied that they are under pressure from the Jordanian government following the recent economic agreements between Jordan and Iraq.

Iyad Allawi, leader of the Iraqi National Accord movement, which set up an office here in February 1996, and Saad Bazzaz, a well-known Iraqi writer and journalist, both rejected reports that the Jordanian government had asked Iraqi dissidents to curtail their activities or leave the Kingdom altogether.

In comments carried by the London-based Al Hayat Arabic daily, Mr. Bazzaz voiced gratitude to His Majesty King Hussein, describing him as very keen to safeguard the unity and sovereignty of Iraq.

Mr. Bazzaz, who was interviewed in London, told Al Hayat that he had requested for political asylum in Britain but he had not received any reply to the request.

"Since I arrived in London 10 days ago, I asked the British government to grant me asylum, but I have not received any reply on my demand," Mr. Bazzaz was quoted as saying by Al Hayat.

"But what is of concern to me is to find a publisher to a book on secrets of the Iraqi history," he was quoted as saying.

Mr. Bazzaz described himself as "an independent Iraqi who has no ties with Iraqi opposition figures such as Mishan Jabouri and will not hesitate to oppose the Iraqi regime." But, he said, he is not a part of any Iraqi opposition group and he does not intend to join any.

Mr. Bazzaz rejected reports that Iraqi opposition was under pressure from the Jordanian government and that the opposition members would not find Jordan suitable for activities after the restoration of good trade relations between Jordan, Iraq.

"I think political relations are separate from trade and economic ties and that nothing forbids me from returning to Jordan, which is my home," Mr. Bazzaz told Al Hayat.

The French news agency, Agence France Presse, meanwhile quoted Mr. Allawi of the Iraqi National Accord movement as saying that his group was not planning to leave Jordan.

"We will continue our activities in Jordan," he told AFP, adding, "Jordan is the home of free Arabs and a land of democracy and freedom."

Mr. Allawi also said he was not aware of any Iraqi dissident who had left Jordan under pressure. "Jordan is a land of stability and security," he was quoted as saying by AFP.

JOB OPPORTUNITIES

(JORDANIANS ONLY)

A new theme restaurant & Bar in Amman has the following positions for immediate employment:

- * Restaurant Manager
- * Food & Beverage Manager
- * Public Relation female hostess or male host

In charge of reception, reservation and marketing.

- Terms and conditions for the above positions:
- 1- Applicants should be holders of a B.A degree or higher.
 - 2- Minimum experience of (3) years in speciality field.
 - 3- Good command of English language.
 - 4- Computer literacy.

Interviews are held at the former El Castello Restaurant, Fourth Circle, Jabal Amman nearby the Prime Ministry Building starting Monday 27/1/97 till Wednesday 29/1/97 from 10.00 a.m. - 4.00 p.m. and from 8.00 p.m. - 11.00 p.m. The positions offer competitive salaries. For further information please call 554200 - 554500 - 551100.

Other positions are available for:

- * Food waiters
- * Captains
- * Stewards
- * Cashiers
- * Storekeepers

Applicants are kindly requested to bring along the necessary documents and a recent photo

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

JORDAN TELEVISION

Tel. 773111-19

PROGRAMME TWO

- 13:30 News in Arabic
- 14:30 News in English
- 15:00 News in Arabic
- 16:30 News in Arabic
- 17:30 News in Arabic
- 18:00 News in Arabic
- 19:30 News in Arabic
- 20:00 News in Arabic
- 20:30 News in Arabic
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- 23:00 News in Arabic
- 23:30 News in Arabic
- 24:00 News in Arabic

PRAYER TIMES

- 05:08 Sunrise
- 11:48 Sunrise
- 14:34 Sunset
- 17:08 Sunset
- 18:28 Sunset

CHI CHIES

- St. George's Church Tel. 554200
- St. George's Church Tel. 554200
- St. George's Church Tel. 554200
- St. George's Church Tel. 554200
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Jordan to host meeting regarding population displacement

By Lima Nabeel
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Under the patronage of HRH Crown Prince Hassan, on March 12-13, Jordan will host a United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) regional meeting to discuss population displacement in Central Asia, Southwest Asia and the Middle East. The UNHCR High Commissioner for Refugees Sadako Ogata will deliver the keynote address.

UNHCR Representative to Jordan Zobia Hassim-Ashagrie, in a statement to Al Rai Arabic daily and the Jordan Times, said that the importance of the meeting lies in the fact that this region has been involved in some of the largest and longest refugee crises in modern times and that there is a pressing need to develop common regional strategies to find a durable solution and prevent future displacement.

Fifty high-level officials from 14 Arab and Islamic countries in the Middle East, Central Asia and Southwest Asia will participate in the two-day forum.

The Amman meeting is anticipated as the beginning of a dialogue among these countries on how to prevent, manage and resolve displacement through comprehensive regional strategies. It should be emphasized that UNHCR has a consistently successful record in establishing regional forums aimed at resolving problems pertaining to involuntary displacement.

The most recent one being the CIS Conference on Refugees and Migrants in the former Soviet Union. There are at present over 26 million people in more than 140 countries with whom the UNHCR is concerned. They include refugees, returnees, internally displaced persons and war affected populations. A large proportion of them are

Muslim refugees and 80 per cent of them are women and children. Palestinian refugees who fall under the UNRWA area of operation are not included in these statistics.

UNHCR established its presence in Jordan in 1991 following the Gulf War. Since then over 15,000 persons have presented themselves at the office to request asylum. Most of these were Iraqis. As Jordan is not a signatory to the 1951 Geneva Convention or the 1967 Protocol, refugees in Jordan are recognised under the mandate of the High Commissioner.

Refugee status is granted to a person who has fled his/her country of origin because of a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership to a particular social group and who cannot or does not want to return.

Ms. Ashagrie applauded

the decision of the Jordanian government to admit refugee children to government schools free of charge, treating them on an equal basis with Jordanian children. This measure was activated almost one year ago.

Ms. Ashagrie added that Jordan's understanding and generosity towards refugee children are great examples which should be followed by other refugee hosting countries.

Abdul Rahman leaves for Rome

Meanwhile, within the framework of multilateral talks on Palestinian refugees, Member of the PLO Executive Committee, responsible for refugees and displaced persons, Dr. As'ad Abdul-Rahman Sunday left for Rome at the head of a Palestinian delegation to attend a three-day meeting on the health sector.

Chamber of industry head meets with Yugoslav deputy minister

AMMAN (Petra) — President of the Amman Chamber of Industry Haider Murad and visiting Deputy Minister of Trade in Yugoslavia Borka Vokovic Sunday discussed issues pertaining to the reopening of trade channels between the two countries.

Mr. Murad said that reactivating trade will develop economic relations and promote commercial

exchange. The two sides stressed the importance of organising visits by commercial delegations from both sides to familiarise themselves with available products and resources.

They also stressed the need for developing and promoting bilateral cooperation in the field of tourism. Mr. Vokovic extended an invitation to a Jordanian

trade delegation to visit Yugoslavia, saying that upon his return he will arrange for a private sector delegation to visit Jordan and to explore possibilities of setting up joint projects and cementing commercial deals.

The Yugoslav official said efforts are being made to overcome all obstacles and difficulties facing the promotion of trade relations

and increasing the volume of trade between both countries.

The volume of external trade between Jordan and Yugoslavia amounted to JD 12.3 million at the end of November 1996.

Jordan exports to Yugoslavia amounted to JD 825,000 in 1996 while Yugoslav exports to Jordan totalled JD 11.5 million.

Women acquitted of murder, brother sentenced in her stead

By Rana Hussein
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — In a rare occurrence at the Amman Criminal Court Sunday, a 25-year-old woman was acquitted of murdering a man, who had allegedly harassed her, and ruled that instead her 20-year old brother was the killer.

Hanan Adnan began to wait that she was the killer. "I swear to God that I am the one who killed [Mousa Hussein] and not my brother," she shouted while being escorted outside to freedom by security officers, following the verdict's announcement.

Ms. Adnan, 25, who had previously confessed to the murder, was being tried at the Criminal Court on charges of shooting Mr. Hussein in the Kafarangeh section of Ajloun on Sept. 1, 1993.

Her 20-year old brother, Amer, a soldier in the military, also confessed to shooting the man and stood trial at the Military Court on charges of shooting Mr. Hussein.

The two were tried in separate courts as Amer Adnan is a military personnel.

On Nov. 5, 1995, the Criminal Court had found Ms. Adnan guilty of the murder and sentenced her to seven-and-a-half-years imprisonment for the murder.

Two months later, the Military Court found her brother Amer guilty of the murder and sentenced him to 12 years in prison.

"After referring to the weapon expert witness report, which confirmed the existence of gun powder on Amer's fingers and clothes, we made the decision to acquit Ms. Adnan of the murder charges against her," Presiding Judge Abdul Ruhman Tawfiq declared.

According to the prosecution, Ms. Adnan, a homemaker, reportedly confessed to shooting and killing Mr. Hussein on Sept. 1, 1993 in the backyard of her house in Kafarangeh in Ajloun after he repeatedly expressed amorous intentions towards her.

But Judge Tawfiq said in his new ruling Sunday that it was in fact her brother Amer who shot the victim, and that Ms. Adnan claimed the responsibility of the

murder she told them that she killed him "to save my reputation as he wanted to ruin my reputation and commit adultery."

According to court documents, previous to the murder Ms. Adnan, told Mr. Hussein to make his intentions known to her father.

"If you want me you can come to my father's house," the document quoted Ms. Adnan as saying.

Later that evening, Mr. Hussein went to Ms. Adnan's house and was monitoring her from the window, the document said.

In the first court trial, the affidavit stated that Ms. Adnan grabbed her father's unlicensed gun and shot Mr. Hussein four times.

Mr. Najdawi told the Jordan Times following the announcement of the verdict that he was satisfied with the ruling, despite the fact that Ms. Adnan herself was not.

"I am pleased that Ms. Adnan, who wanted to sacrifice herself for her brother, was acquitted, Mr. Najdawi added. "This way we will not have two people serving prison terms for the same murder."

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Tafileh mayor withdraws resignation

By Ghazi Amrreen
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Tafileh Mayor Ahmad Qura'an has withdrawn his resignation as a result of mediation efforts instigated by several notables and elders from the Tafileh governorate.

Last Wednesday, Mr. Qura'an submitted his resignation to the Tafileh Municipal Council. Tafileh Governor Ahmad Lawzi and Minister of Municipal and Rural Affairs and the Environment Abdul Razzaq Tubeishat, blaming the

government for failure to listen to the people.

He also claimed discord between himself and municipal council members.

Citing some reasons for his resignation, Mr. Qura'an accused council members of ratifying "many decisions" during his leave of absence to the United States.

He said that these decisions do not serve public interests nor do they encourage people to improve the city.

As an example, Mr.

Qura'an complained that, during his absence, the acting mayor endorsed a decision to change the status of a plot of land from agricultural to commercial.

He added that the council converted seven workers who were paid daily into regular staff with fixed monthly salaries and stated that such a decision does not serve municipality efforts to ease financial burdens.

Mr. Qura'an's resignation was described as untimely by Council Member Mohammad Harasis.

"Had it not been for aid received by the Cities and Villages Development Bank and the Industrial Development Bank, the municipality would not have been able to honour its financial commitments," he said.

Previous to being elected as mayor, Mr. Qura'an worked for the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Interior until 1985. He also served as governor of Karak.

Attorney general interrogated in Masri case

By Rana Hussein
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Attorney General Fathi Rifai, the first defence witness in the case of Mazen Masri, a man accused of killing his two children last year, Sunday testified that the defendant willingly confessed in front of him and other officials.

"Mr. Masri confessed of his own volition and I saw no traces of torture and, as I recall, he was neither pressured nor threatened by anyone to make any confession," Mr. Rifai told the court.

Mr. Rifai, 52, was present when Mr. Masri confessed to authorities on Sept. 25 to poisoning his two children Hanin, nine, and Hani, six as well as to a previous attempt to kill his wife and two children.

Mr. Masri, 34, faces two counts of first degree murder and three counts of attempted murder. Mr. Rifai stated that he, along with Criminal Prosecutor Abdul Aziz Rawashdeh and Shmeisani Precinct Chief Major Fathi Hmoud, met with Mr. Masri on Sept. 25.

The witness said he sat with Mr. Masri for four hours discussing the circumstances surrounding the children's death without broaching the possibility that Mr. Masri was a suspect.

"However, at approximately 12:20 a.m., as I was

about to leave the police station, Mr. Masri asked me to stay as he said he had two things to say," Mr. Rifai testified.

"The first thing he told me was that he wanted us to call his wife as he wanted to see her and then he queried me as to the punishment [for the crime] if he was declared the killer," Mr. Rifai said, adding that he told Mr. Masri that it was up to the court to determine the punishment.

"Immediately after this exchange, Mazen confessed and told us how he committed the crime," the attorney general said.

When questioned by the criminal prosecutor about the circumstances which led authorities to suspect that Mr. Masri was the killer, Mr. Rifai said that several factors and evidence suggested that he was a prime suspect.

Mr. Rifai said that before confessing, Mr. Masri had told the authorities from the first day his children were killed that there was no trace of cyanide in the children's throats, "a fact which only the forensic experts knew."

"When I asked him how he knew this, he responded that a relative was informed by the Minister of Interior and duly informed him," Mr. Rifai said.

"I called the minister and asked him about the matter and he denied allocating

any information as he was unaware of the results," Mr. Rifai said, adding that when he confronted Mr. Masri with this fact, the defendant changed his story and said that another relative told him that his children were either killed by snake bite or cyanide poisoning.

Other factors which played a role in leading the authorities to suspect the children's father, Mr. Rifai said, were the circumstances surrounding the murders.

"In analysing the crime, we had two possibilities: the killer was either an insider or an outsider. But as a neighbour told police that she saw no one entering the building after the couple had left, we concluded it might be one of the parents," he said.

He added that the fact that Mr. Masri was the last person to leave the apartment increased the probability of his guilt.

When Defence Attorney Ahmad Najdawi asked why his client was kept for one day at the police station, Mr. Rifai responded that it was to protect Ms. Masri.

"Mr. Masri had informed us that his wife, Hiam Hamoudeh, attempted to commit suicide [in the aftermath of the children's death] and since we suspected that he may have previously attempted to murder her, we feared he might harm her in some

way] and claim that she took her own life," Mr. Rifai said.

According to Mr. Rifai, previous to his confession the accused informed him that he was harsh with his children, and that his children feared him.

"When I asked him why his children were afraid of him, he told me that he used to beat them with a stick. And when I asked him why he did it, he responded that he did not remember why," Mr. Rifai, one of 23 prosecution witnesses, said.

The children were found by their mother in their apartment in the Abu Oneizah Housing Complex in Shmeisani on Sept. 11, 1996, after she returned home from giving her husband a ride to work.

In his confession, Mr. Masri allegedly cited family problems and resentment of the children's attachment to his wife as the main reason for committing the crime.

On Dec. 31, Mr. Masri retracted his confessions and stated that he had fabricated them, claiming that he was subjected to psychological pressure which forced him to confess.

The court tribunal headed by Judge Abdul Ruhman Tawfiq and Judges Ismael Hmoud and Mifleh Mubeldin, postponed the case until Feb. 4 to hear the second defence witness.

Mu'ta University receives scientific boost from Germany

By Sacha Baggili
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Students and tutors at Mu'ta University, so frequently hindered in their pursuits by financial constraints, are now delighted in the latest supply of study materials donated by various German institutions.

Professor Marwan Mousa, the university president's advisor for international affairs, has secured a donation of 10 international periodicals to cover a period of five years, from the German Research Institute (DFG) and the Ministry of Economic Communications in Germany, at an estimated value of JD 250,000.

Volumes for four of these periodicals, arrived at the university this week, and "the remainder are expected soon," Professor Mousa said.

These periodicals will mainly serve the departments of archaeology, electrical engineering, chemistry and physics.

"This aid is absolutely

crucial for students of these particular departments. Students of such subjects must constantly be informed of innovations in their fields," Professor Mousa said.

"These periodicals will especially benefit final year and post-graduate students," he added.

For the past two years, the university's international relations have centred around connections made by Professor Mousa, during his two years in Germany, with a research grant from the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation (AVH).

This grant finances research fellowships for highly qualified foreign academics.

In appreciation for the success of his research activity in Germany as well as his contribution to the development of a now internationally renowned catalyst, upon his return to Jordan in 1994, the university received a donation of scientific equipment worth JD 500,000 from the AVH and the Max-Planck Institution.

Subsequently, the university was awarded cultural and historical periodicals and books, a gift from the German Embassy in Jordan.

In an interview with the Jordan Times, Professor Mousa relayed the university's difficulties due to its location in the south and therefore "somewhat deprived" region of the Kingdom and talked of a low spirit which has often prevailed amongst the university community.

"This new opening in international relations has eradicated much of our anxiety. We previously felt isolated from educational developments in the rest of the world," he said.

Professor Mousa elucidated scientific exchange programmes which have been activated between members of staff at Mu'ta University and those from universities and research institutions in Germany.

As the only university in the south of Jordan, the benefits brought about by such donations will be enjoyed by a broad section

of the Jordanian community.

"Theoretically speaking our university serves the educational needs of half the country," Professor Mousa said.

"As our facilities do not include the variety of social clubs provided by other universities, our library is the heart of activity for our students and they are all keen book borrowers," he said.

But he further stated that library services are also frequently used by other members of the local community, such as industrialists and manufacturers.

The aid given to Mu'ta university has also initiated cooperation with other universities in Jordan, such as chemists from Yarmouk University wishing to make use of the new literature.

"Such co-operation is essential for academic progress in the Kingdom as a whole," Professor Mousa concluded.

AMC reports 24% increase in produce exports

AMMAN (Petra) — The Agricultural Marketing Corporation (AMC) Saturday reported the export of 25,000 tonnes of fresh fruit and vegetables worth estimated JD 72.7 million last year.

The AMC stated that last year's sales figures represented an increase of 24.1 per cent over 1995 exports.

Fruit accounted for 60 per cent of the total exports, the corporation

increased in 1996 by 10,600 tonnes over 1995. The AMC said the United Arab Emirates (UAE) topped the list of importing countries with 38.5 per cent, followed by Bahrain with 14.4 per cent, Qatar with 11.8 per cent, Kuwait with 11.5 per cent, Saudi Arabia with 7.6 per cent and other Arab countries with 1 per cent.

Jordanian exports to foreign countries accounted for 2 per cent of its total exports, according to the AMC.

What's Going On

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Jordan participates in Scandinavian trade fair

COPENHAGEN (Petra) — Jordan was lauded for its hospitality as well as tourist facilities and services at an international tourism exhibition held in Copenhagen Saturday.

The exhibition, which was inaugurated by Princess Alexandra, linked international tourism companies and businesspersons from the tourism sector.

They described the stability which Jordan boasts, subsequent to its signing of the peace treaty with Israel in

October of 1994, as attracting European tourism to the Middle East and complimented Jordan's "archaeological treasures."

General Manager of Blue Bird Tour Agency Ali Rawashdeh represented Jordan at the exhibition.

Mr. Rawashdeh met with international businesspersons from the tourism sector and concluded agreements with them to attract Scandinavian tourism to Jordan.

He also met with businesspersons who seek to promote health tourism in the Dead Sea.

They said the Dead Sea is considered one of the leading healing sites for those suffering from skin diseases which the Scandinavian climate does not help.

Executive Director of one of Danish tour company Knud Pier said that his company is preparing a package which includes Jordan and Israel.

He added that he agreed to arrange one-week trips from Denmark.

mark. Sweden and Norway to include all archaeological sites in Jordan.

Mr. Pier said that he hoped to start these trips next summer. He added that of the countries in the region, Jordan best meets the Scandinavian tourism requirements.

However, Mr. Rawashdeh described a lack of direct flights linking Stockholm, Copenhagen and Amman as hindering Scandinavian tourism to Jordan.

Afghan peace talks open in Iran without Taliban

TEHRAN, Iran (Agencies) — Factions on one side of Afghanistan's civil war began peace talks Saturday to end strife in their country, but the Taliban militia, which controls two thirds of the war-torn country, is refusing to take part.

"I regret that not all Afghan groups invited by Iran are participating in this meeting," U.N. representative Norbert Holl said. "Without the participation of all Afghan groups it will be difficult to achieve a negotiated settlement."

Beside Afghan faction representatives and Mr. Holl, officials from Pakistan and Turkey also attended the talks.

The Taliban did not send a representative to the talks to protest what it sees as Iran's interference in Afghan affairs and because of its belief that the talks will not produce a ceasefire, a top militia official said Saturday.

The Taliban boycotted the talks because "Iranian authorities didn't observe proper distance from our affairs" and because the talks will not yield "concrete results," said Mohammad Rabbani, head of the Taliban Council running the war-shattered Afghan capital, Kabul.

"We don't care if they

(Taliban) don't come, but it's a good opportunity for them. They've missed the chance," Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati said at the end of the first round of negotiations.

He blamed the United States for Taliban's boycott. "It seems that the trip of the U.S. official Robin Raphel to the region was effective," he said. This was a reference to a meeting Wednesday in Islamabad, Pakistan's capital, between Taliban representative Mullah Wakil Ahmad and Ms. Raphel, an assistant secretary of state.

Meanwhile, the Iranian press Sunday poured scorn on the Afghan peace conference, saying the Taliban Islamic militia's boycott had turned the event into a pointless farce.

The English-language Iran News, which is close to the Foreign Ministry, said the second Afghan peace conference in three months "has no real practical significance when the main belligerent party is absent."

"Conferences such as the current one in Tehran serve no useful purpose other than to damage our national prestige in international circles," the paper added, saying there was "no discernible positive outcome in sight."

The Tehran Times turned on Pakistan, which it said was the Taliban's main backer, and said Islamabad had also undermined the conference by sending a low-key delegation.

"Given that the Taliban is not free to choose the right path and Pakistan is practically discouraging the group from seeking a peaceful settlement, it is clear that holding talks and conferences... will get nowhere," said the paper.

It said that "issuing statements" would not bring peace to Afghanistan, adding that the "Taliban should be made to abandon military strategy under military pressure."

The Jomhuri-Isami daily, which is close to Iran's conservative fundamentalist clergy, accused the government of "naivety" by inviting the Taliban.

"It is not right that the United States, which is thousands of kilometres from here, tries to have influence in Afghanistan while we, as a neighbouring country, remain voluntarily neutral and indifferent for fear of being accused of interfering," said the paper.

Shi'ite Muslim Iran is wary of the ultra-orthodox Sunni Muslim Taliban and Tehran continues to recognise the government of former President Burhanuddin

Rabbani which the Taliban ousted in September.

The official Iranian News Agency (IRNA) had initially reported that the Taliban arrived in Tehran Thursday, the same day as Mr. Rabbani and Prime Minister Gulbuddin Hekmatyar.

The Keyhan International newspaper cited an "unconfirmed" report Sunday that the Taliban's Foreign Minister Mohammad Gaus had later left Tehran after a virulent anti-Taliban speech at Friday prayers by prominent ultra-conservative Shi'ite cleric Ayatollah Ahmad Jannati.

Ayatollah Jannati, in prayers at Tehran University in front of Mr. Hekmatyar and Mr. Rabbani, described the Taliban as "without feelings and merciless — they kill, destroy and do whatever they want."

The paper added: "It is clear more than anything that Taliban is a creation of the U.S., Pakistan and Saudi Arabia."

The Taliban has accused its opponents of using peace talks as a breather for regrouping their forces, and on Sunday Taliban forces pushed on with their offensive in northern Afghanistan and claimed to have captured two districts in the strategic Ghorband Valley.



House Speaker Newt Gingrich answers questions from constituents in Roswell Saturday during one of three town hall meetings. Mr. Gingrich talked publicly for the first time about his unprecedented punishment for ethics violations (Reuters photo)

Gingrich defends honour before Georgia constituents

MARIETTA, Georgia (R) — House of Representatives Speaker Newt Gingrich said Saturday that admitting to ethics violations was the "most honourable thing to do" to resolve the issue and flatly denied deceiving Congress.

In a series of public meetings in his home district, the Georgia Republican sought to defend his position as congressional leader and deflect criticism brought about by his unprecedented \$50,000 penalty for ethics breaches.

Mr. Gingrich, in his first public comments since the House voted a reprimand and the \$300,000 penalty Tuesday, said he had made a mistake by trusting his lawyers to guide him safely through the complex congressional code of conduct.

"I trusted the law firm to have done the job right. They didn't do the job right and I didn't catch them, so I thought the most honourable thing to do when you have done something wrong is to say, 'this was a mistake,'" he said.

"Saying upfront, this was a mistake, is the only hon-

ourable thing you can do if you've made a mistake," he said.

Some 1,000 people attended the first two meetings in Roswell and Marietta, which were marked by raucous exchanges between supporters and critics of the controversial speaker.

Mr. Gingrich bristled at one constituent's suggestion that the penalty could be considered a "fine" for intentionally deceiving Congress. Instead, he said he had agreed only to being careless.

"There was no suggestion of intent to deceive. A mistake had been made. That is the total of what I agreed to," on the report by the House Ethics Committee, he said.

He added that he would never have accepted the six-figure penalty if it had been described as a "fine."

"I would have fought a fine, because if the Ethics Committee, which is a non-judicial system, were in a position to destroy middle-class representatives you've got a precedent of enormous danger," he said.

Earlier, Mr. Gingrich said

he was the victim of a false charge. How much have they cost the taxpayers?" Mr. Gingrich said.

Mr. Gingrich supporters passed out handouts detailing his position on the ethics problem, saying the ethics panel had not found him in violation of U.S. tax laws and comparing his problems to journalistic scandals that have rocked the White House.

The meetings came as the 53-year-old conservative and his allies struggled to weather a storm of controversy in Washington raised by the ethics committee report and Tuesday's 395-28 vote to reprimand him and impose the penalty.

The committee made no finding as to whether Mr. Gingrich used tax-exempt funds illegally for partisan political purposes. In the form of his college course, but the speaker admitted he should have sought legal advice on the issue.

Mr. Gingrich must now find a way to pay his six-figure penalty that would not arouse a new furor.

Saudi papers urge Algeria to crush militants with 'iron hand'

RIYADH (Agencies) — Saudi newspapers Sunday urged the Algerian government to crush an Islamic militant movement with an "iron hand" after negotiations failed to resolve the crisis.

The Al-Yom daily called on "political forces in Algeria to use a decisive method rather than dialogue which turned out to be a failure in the fight against terrorism."

"The time has come to hit the sedition leaders with an iron hand," it added.

Al Bilad newspaper also called for tougher methods. "Because the extremists reject dialogue with the government, security steps must be bolstered and the grip around the extremists tightened to prevent them from achieving their goal to keep Algeria in anarchy and violence," it said.

Meanwhile, The Algeria government, a day after President Liamine Zerroual said innocent citizens were daily victims of "unequaled terrorism," ordered its independent newspapers not to play into the hands of "terrorist propaganda."

Le Matin newspaper reported earlier that suspected Muslim rebels killed 59 people in more massacres in hamlets near Algiers.

Quoting villagers, it said: "Fifty-nine have been assassinated during this weekend in the centre of the country, mostly in Berrougia and in the villages of Benramdane, Saouala and

Baraki."

The Interior Ministry accused some papers of blowing up the death toll in massacres or of inventing killings and said this "plays into the hands of terrorist propaganda and its masterminds."

"The state will no more tolerate all these deviations which will be opposed by the clarity and rigour of the law," it said in a statement carried by the Algerian News Agency (APS) Saturday.

Algerian authorities have draconian powers over the press but independent papers have walked a tightrope in giving details of killings, unlearned by the authorities who until recently repeatedly said only "residual terrorism" remained.

Algeria's main independent dailies all reported more killings in the conflict which broke out five years ago after the authorities cancelled a general election dominated by the Islamic Salvation Front.

Le Matin said more than 250 people had been killed in the two weeks since the start of the Muslim holy month Ramadan on Jan. 10. In that period, bombs have blasted Algiers and other cities and residents have independently reported the slaughter of entire families, including infants, in isolated communities.

Mr. Zerroual told the nation in a televised address Friday: "Innocent citizens, of all categories, are victims each day of a blind terror-

ism never equalled in other times or other places."

The Interior Ministry warning reinforced a 1994 confidential circular to editors, saying: "The publication of all information of a security nature not covered by the framework of an official statement... or public press briefing... is banned."

In the five-year-old conflict, many Algerian newspapers have been closed for up to six months for reporting killings.

More than 60 people working for the media have also been killed in attacks blamed on Muslim rebels who accuse them of supporting the authorities and giving only the official side of events.

Hocine Ait Ahmad, head of the opposition Socialist Forces Front (FFS) denounced Mr. Zerroual's address, in which the president blamed foreign circles for manipulating "criminals, traitors and mercenaries" — Algerian terms for Muslim fundamentalists.

"The state is unable to ensure security and General Zerroual has nothing else to say after remaining silent for weeks but international conspiracy," said Mr. Ait Ahmad, an independence war veteran living in self-exile in Switzerland.

"How do they dare, after five years of a war that has killed more than 100,000 people, to repeat old Stalinist clichés?"

Independent estimates put the number killed at 60,000.

Australia Day celebrated amidst rising racial tension

SYDNEY (AFP) — Australians celebrated the 20th anniversary of British settlement Sunday but festivities were once again staged against a backdrop of rising tension between white and indigenous Australians.

The year has been overshadowed by a renewed "debate" on race and immigration, a furor which was largely created by one woman — notorious independent Member of Parliament Pauline Hanson, from the blue-collar seat of Oxley.

Her depiction of Aborigines as lazy, ungrateful and overindulged, and her warnings that the country was in danger of being "swamped by Asians" were taken up enthusiastically by a significant number of Australians.

One newspaper which recently held an "Australian of the year" competition was reportedly inundated with votes for Mr. Hanson, forcing it to appeal to the wider community for more nominations.

Australian Governor-General Sir William Deane, the queen's representative to the country, Sunday used his first Australia Day speech to call for reconciliation between black and white Australians by the year 2001.

Sir Deane called the state of Aboriginal health "a tragic story of sickness, suffering, dying and death of fellow Australians."

He said unless the issue was resolved, and genuine reconciliation strived for, Australians would enter the next century "as a diminished people."

"We won't achieve (reconciliation) until we reach the stage of basic justice and decency where the life expectancy of an Aboriginal baby is at least comparable to that of a non-Aboriginal one," he said.

Both sides of politics agree the most important issue to be resolved this year is a complex and prolonged legal battle over indigenous Australians' right to "native title" over land with which they have traditional links.

Media attention has also focused this week on Australia's only urban ghetto, which is set to be partially demolished in an attempt to halt soaring crime rates.

Curse of interesting times grips Hong Kong

HONG KONG (R) — There is a Chinese curse that condemns the unwary to living in "interesting times."

For jittery Hong Kong, as it prepares for the transition to Chinese rule in less than five months, these are interesting and unsettling times by any standards.

A week ago, China proposed emasculating Hong Kong's civil liberties laws, including part of its Bill of Rights.

Ignoring diplomatic warnings and public protests, Hong Kong leader-elect Tung Chee-hwa endorsed the Beijing proposals.

A Provisional Legislature to be installed by China met in the Chinese city of Shenzhen to shield itself from a legal challenge from Hong Kong's democrats.

And Mr. Tung released his list of advisers, noticeably excluding members of Hong Kong's pro-democracy camp.

A bright spot came when China unexpectedly released Hong Kong newspaper journalist Xi Yang Saturday, three years into a 12-year jail sentence for stealing state secrets.

Mr. Xi's parole delighted Hong Kong people, but ma-

ny questioned China's motives.

"While senior Beijing leaders may have wanted to create a more relaxed atmosphere in the 157 days to the changeover by allowing Mr. Xi to return home, Beijing will have to do far more to dispel fears that civil liberties are about to be curtailed," political commentator Chris Yeung wrote Sunday in the English-language South China Morning Post.

Departing Governor Chris Patten, whose democratic reforms deeply angered China, welcomed Mr. Xi's release. But he stepped up the pressure on the provisional legislature that is expected to dilute Hong Kong's human rights laws and ordinances.

The 60-member provisional chamber will be installed upon the handover on July 1, 1997 when the red-and-gold flag of China rises over Hong Kong, replacing the legislature elected in 1995.

In a stroke, China will have undone Mr. Patten's reforms and excluded the democratic lobby from the chamber.

The new chamber Saturday chose as its chairman,

the equivalent to the speaker of parliament, a former colonial official who had switched allegiance to China.

Rita Fan, 54, a former Hong Kong legislator and cabinet member and a key player in committees overseeing the handover, received 33 votes to 27 for her rival, Andrew Wong, president of the incumbent elected Legislative Council.

Mr. Patten denounced the move as a "bad day for Hong Kong" and said the provisional chamber had no "legitimacy, no credibility and no authority."

He challenged the provisional legislators, almost half of whom sit on the doomed elected chamber, to explain themselves to the people of Hong Kong.

"Many of them actually voted for our Bill of Rights," Mr. Patten said. "Have they all changed their mind?"

"I think there's one very simple question which has to be addressed. Is Hong Kong going to have the same freedoms after 1997 — yes or no?"

Mr. Tung, a conservative, Shanghai-born shipping magnate whose given

names mean "build China," said the proposed changes were necessary to strike "the right balance between individual rights and social order."

Mr. Tung said other states required permits for demonstrations and set limits on the overseas links of political groups, two of the changes that are worrying the pro-democracy camp.

His defence failed to convince the democratic lobby.

"I don't think we can be masters of our own house," Yeung Sum, deputy leader of the Democratic Party, told reporters.

"The Chinese Communist Party is master of the house, and Mr. Tung is the servant of the Chinese Communist Party," he said.

Mr. Tung Friday also announced his inner cabinet of advisers, or Executive Council, most of who are prominent in the pro-Beijing lobby and sit on China-appointed panels and committees responsible for the handover.

"They fit Mr. Tung's style as he is also a conservative himself in his political outlook," said the Democrat's Yeung.

U.S. study says new evidence implicates Khmer Rouge chiefs

NEW HAVEN, Connecticut (R) — The U.S.-funded Cambodian genocide programme has discovered enough new evidence to "clearly implicate" Khmer Rouge leaders in crimes against humanity during their brutal 1975-79 rule, the manager of the programme said Saturday.

The new evidence also suggests the death toll might be closer to two million than the previous, widely believed figure of one million, said Craig Etcheson, associate research scientist in Yale University's Cambodian Genocide Programme.

"This removes any question of whether or not crimes against humanity were committed, and who committed them," Mr.

Etcheson told in an interview.

The mass of information collected over the past two years includes gravesites, signed execution orders and documents on workings of the Khmer Rouge security service.

But Mr. Etcheson stopped short of saying there was enough evidence to convict the Khmer Rouge leaders before a world tribunal.

"These are questions for prosecutors and judges instead of the mere bearers of information," he said.

Several top leaders of the "killing fields" regime are known or believed to still be alive and in territory controlled by Khmer Rouge hardliners, including Pol Pot, the leader of the group, his deputy Nuon Chea, no-

minial Khmer Rouge leader Khieu Samphan, defence chief Son Sen, and feared one-legged commander Ta Mok.

Mr. Etcheson said the top leadership of the Communist Party of Cambodia of 1975-79 was "clearly implicated," including former Khmer Rouge Foreign Minister Ieng Sary.

Mr. Ieng Sary joined the Khmer Rouge government last year after receiving a royal amnesty from a 1979 death sentence handed down in absentia for his role in the deaths of more than one million people under the Pol Pot regime.

Mr. Etcheson said the researchers have a general policy of not commenting on individual cases, such as Mr. Ieng Sary's.

Korean union threatens new strike

SEOUL (R) — The leader of South Korea's outlawed union group, addressing a meeting of his followers, threatened a new strike against a new labour law, similar to those passed in the U.S., unless the bill was scrapped.

"If the bill is not scrapped, we will not work and we will launch a general strike against the law," Kwun Young-kil told a crowd of 500 people at a meeting in Seoul. Police put the crowd of the crowd at 500 and witnesses said the crowd was probably some 1,000 in between.

It was Mr. Kwun's first public appearance since he was arrested in June at a gathering with six union deputies to meet them for a meeting. Almost four weeks of strikes were held.

President Kim Young-sam, facing domestic pressure and stung by international criticism, last week agreed to send the controversial law back to parliament for revision, but he said it would not be voted.

The outlawed Confederation of Korean Trade Unions is mounting its pressure on the government with a day of strikes on Wednesday.

Similar demonstration in a group of concrete roads and Seoul's financial district was held on Wednesday. The demonstration was organized by the confederation and the officially sanctioned Federation of Korean Trade Unions.

Members of the confederation, along with other groups, held protest signs and banners at the demonstration. Protesters held signs that read "Stop the law" and "Repeal the law."

A group of workers carried red poles with yellow and red banners, traditional colours of Korean funerals — "death" and "mourning."

The union is for the first time in 12 months, but for all of South Korea's 40 million people and Mr. Kwun.

He accused the government of "squandering money" and "building a steel city" in the country's second largest city, Ulsan, which collapsed under a mountain of debt last week instead of supporting embattled small enterprises.

He said the government was "stealing" money from the people and "stealing" money from the people and "stealing" money from the people.

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Jordan Times

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Illogical reasoning

JORDAN'S PROTEST to Lebanon over the sudden release of three Iraqi diplomats who confessed to murdering a Jordanian citizen in 1994 is legally, politically, and morally correct. There is no way that the Lebanese government can convince us that the Jordanian protest constitutes meddling in Lebanon's internal affairs. When the case of the murdered *Taleb Souheil* is viewed in proper perspective, the Jordanian indignation at the release of three self-confessed Iraqi murderers becomes all the more appreciated. The three Iraqi officials not only freely confessed to committing the crime, following their capture while trying to flee the country in April 1994, the Lebanese government was also so incensed at the refusal of Baghdad to lift their diplomatic privileges to face prosecution that it decided to break diplomatic relations with Iraq.

The sudden decision by the Lebanese authorities that they cannot prosecute the three killers calls for deep concern. Their sudden about-face cannot be explained except in political terms. Otherwise why or how would they need three years to make a legal determination that runs counter to their earlier verdict that the three Iraqis are nothing but murderers who exploited their diplomatic status to commit a crime against a Jordanian national?

The 1961 Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Privileges and Immunities was never intended to serve as a licence to kill. The spirit of the convention needs to be looked at and observed by all states. If diplomats are caught committing a felony, they are supposed to be prosecuted. Had Lebanon received assurances from Baghdad that the three "diplomats" would be tried in an Iraqi court on the basis of their confession and that they would be punished accordingly, we could perhaps understand the Lebanese government's literal and strict application of the convention.

There is nothing in the international treaty that suggests that diplomats implicated in a crime would escape trial and punishment. In this case, Baghdad has not offered any guarantees that their envoys will be criminally prosecuted in a court of law. Freeing self-confessed criminals would make a mockery of the convention in question, not to mention the commitment of all nations to fight terrorism.

In any case, since when raising issues on terrorism constitutes interference in domestic affairs as Beirut now contends? Committing acts of terrorism and grave human rights violations is the concern of the entire international community. The era when states can hide behind absolute sovereignty to perpetrate serious violations of international norms on human rights is gone forever. Jordan has a special stake in this case because the murdered man, though Iraqi-born, was a Jordanian citizen. We doubt that the Lebanese government would stay silent if one of its nationals was murdered by a person or a group of persons who enjoyed diplomatic immunity anywhere in the world. Diplomatic immunity is designed to aid diplomats conduct their legitimate duties and functions without interference. This is the true reading of the relevant international law. Any other interpretation would simply negate the intent and purposes of diplomatic privileges.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

AN EDITORIAL in Al Ra'i daily urged the Arab states to unite and forget their differences in order to aid the Sudanese who are facing a new foreign conspiracy against their nation. The war in Sudan has entered its second week, with no end in sight, the editorial says, adding that it appears that the conflict could actually spread to the Ugandan borders. All this seems to be happening while Sudanese delegations go from one Arab capital to another, seeking understanding and help for the nation's plight, continued the editorial. Jordan was the first to respond to the cry for protection of Sudan's population and its territorial integrity, upon request from His Majesty King Hussein, says the editorial. Meanwhile, Nicholas Burns, U.S. State Department spokesman, issued a statement saying that his country requested that neighboring countries respect Sudan's territorial integrity by abstaining from sending mercenaries or aid to the opposition, while a statement issued by the American embassy in Khartoum says that the current situation in Sudan is an internal matter, to be solved by the government and the opposition, and that the U.S. is not obligated to intervene or attempt to halt the current state of belligerence.

A WRITER for Al Ra'i pointed out the contradictory nature of one of Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz's recent statements which says that Iraq received goods and services in return for free oil it exported to Jordan. Fahed Fanek asks how the oil can be considered as offered for free as long as it was bartered for goods and services from Jordan at the current international oil rates. The writer also wondered how Mr. Aziz could start his statement by saying that Iraq has no debts to Jordan and end it by stating that Iraq is ready to pay the debts. The oil Jordan receives from Iraq is repayment of Iraqi debts to the Kingdom. The writer points out that Mr. Aziz contradicts his own statement that Iraq gives Jordan free oil when in reality Jordan pays for it with goods and services.

Economic Review

By Dr. Yusuf Mansur

Will the euro replace the dollar?

THERE ARE fears of cumulative global weakening because of the European Monetary Union (EMU) which will bring into physical reality, in January 1999, the euro: the manifestation of the European Currency Unit (ECU). Investors worry about the possible competition between the euro and the dollar while growth economists wonder what the effect of the euro on world growth will be in the coming three years.

Additionally, while many countries around the world have made the dollar the most prominent component of their reserves (the world average share of the dollar in official reserves is 60 per cent), this dominance is being seriously challenged by the Deutschmark (DM), also a major component of the ECU. If the euro becomes as popular as the DM, international private investments in Europe will no doubt flourish. However, official reserve portfolios will no doubt have to change. How this change will affect the world, and especially Jordan, remains to be seen. A strategic awareness of the play of the dollar and the euro will help forecast Jordan's economic and monetary stability in the few years to come.

The ECU is the product of a cooperative exchange rate agreement known as the European Monetary System (EMS) which, in March 1979, introduced the European currency unit (ECU) to be used as the official unit of account for budget transactions and as a reserve asset of the European Union. Presently, there are no physical ECUs, they are simply accounting entries whose ownership is determined by debits and credits to the financial accounts of the concerned business and institutional entities. In many ways, the ECU is analogous to the Special Drawing Right (SDR) which is a composite currency unit issued by the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

The ECU was welcome internationally for two reasons. It consists of the currencies of the EU member nations, with the DM making up over 30 per cent of its value. In contrast to the SDR, which has a dollar content of over 40 per cent, the ECU has zero dollar content. Therefore, it has been widely accepted by private businesses as a greater hedge against the dollar than the SDR. Furthermore, the ECU is considered to be a very stable currency because of the commitment of the members of the EMS to stabilise the European exchange rates.

Anneke van Dok, the Dutch minister for foreign trade, stressed that the role of the euro will be that of "a buffer against blows from outside the EU" and that "in (the euro) will help us (EU member states) weather blows that could result from our internal relations." In her view, the use of a single currency will enhance trade considerably as traders are freed from the impediments that different currency transactions bring to cross-border activities.

In the long run, the European Union will require fewer reserves once the euro is launched as the central banks of the European Monetary Union countries convert assets previously held in European currencies to the euro. Consequently, the share of dollar reserves will expand as the two currencies are pitted against each other. Or as they say in the world of finance: "as the two currencies are used to hedge against each other." But is the econom-

ic situation in the EU different from that in the U.S.? The answer is affirmative.

The contrast between U.S. and EU employment and growth figures is a source of alarm to business strategists and financial analysts. Many of the countries in Western Europe are facing high unemployment, while the U.S. is undergoing one of the strongest economic recoveries it has had in decades, with employment hovering around the full employment rate and no signs of it slowing down. Therefore, when one of the trade giants is enjoying a high peak in the business cycle, the other will be in a low trough. Thus, with both economies diametrically opposed, it will be no surprise to investors that the monetary policies of both Goliaths will also be at odds with each other. Their currencies will be pitted against each other.

In the immediate future, world output is expected to expand by 4.1 per cent in 1997, which is the best economic performance enjoyed since 1988 when the conservative and their supply side economies ruled the world through their new old world order of chaos. This expected growth rate surpasses even last year's growth rate of 3.8 per cent. However, the optimism will have to be carried by the U.S. alone, as EU members planning to join the EMU learn prudence and use conservative monetary policies. Many of the EU members are forced to reduce their budget deficits to meet the EMU standards. This is not an easy task, especially in countries that are suffering from high unemployment, such as France where the Chirac government witnesses a record 12.5 per cent unemployment rate. (Unemployment stood at 11.7 per cent at the time of Chirac's election in May 1995).

With budget cuts in the EU countries, consumers are less likely to purchase products, especially with governments intent to close budget gaps. Yet budgets have to be tightened, which makes truly for a hitler medicine. Furthermore, it seems that the arena is empty of Japan, the world's third largest contender and a continuous source of headache to the other two. Tokyo is also expected to restrict spending, which means that the budget of the Japanese government will be tightened and the economic recovery witnessed in Japan last year will slow down considerably; possibly to a downturn. In other words, the arena will only have two players.

Jordan has to reduce the share of dollar in its foreign reserves in the long run. The present dollar share of 80 per cent will have to decrease as the euro becomes a reality and as it evolves as a true hedge against fluctuations of the dollar. In the short run, the increased demand for the dollar in Europe and the decreased demand for the dollar in the rest of the world will keep analysts wondering for a while.

At the end of this labyrinth of international exchange rates, I am reminded by the words of Paul Samuelson, the great master of economic doctrine who said: "If you want to predict, predict a lot." Therefore, I will not forecast an outcome as one is usually tempted to do at the end of an analytical journey. I just hope that I have shed some light on a somewhat hairy issue.

Human Rights File

Domestic help has human rights too

By Waleed M. Sadi

THE GOVERNMENT recently tried to re-regulate the residency requirements of domestic help being recruited from foreign countries, essentially Sri Lanka and the Philippines, by stipulating new ground rules on how they can be brought into the country and how they may stay in the service of Jordanian families.

What the concerned authorities have noticeably failed to do until now was to take effective measures to make sure that once domestic helps are in the country they are treated humanely and fairly.

It is common knowledge, after years of experience with the phenomenon of Sri Lankan and Filipina maids, that most of them work in slave-like conditions that solicit the least attention from the state or concern from the public.

It is a well-known fact that many of these people who are driven by poverty to leave their homes and loved ones to serve us long hours are deprived of a weekly holiday, that all human beings have, with a majority of them literally locked in the premises where they work for weeks on end, without ever seeing the "outside world".

The shocking allegations, that we all have heard and read about two years ago, that the honorary consul of Sri Lanka had a role in maid recruitment suggests that many of these women are sexually exploited and mistreated in every sense of the word. There is no other way of describing the fate and conditions of these people other than they are being treated as objects, deprived of every human right under the sun.

Why, then, did our responsible people in government see fit to further regulate the residency issues related to domestic help but did not see appropriate to prescribe binding rules on how these people should be treated? This overlook is, I believe, a big puzzle and a cause for great concern.

We need a legally binding code for the employment and treatment of domestic help in our midst as a matter of highest priority. The proposed legislation's scope would also deal with common complaints against some maids who are sometimes accused of abusing the trust placed in them by either engaging in sexual activities or stealing from the houses in which they work. Admittedly, the behaviour of a number of maids ends up tarnishing the good image of all the others. But this reality should not stop us from protecting the innocent majority from the "slave-like" treatment they are being accorded.

For this purpose, we need a special bureau for receiving and dealing with complaints from either side. Redress of problems arising from the employment of domestic help must be effective and swift, in accordance with the legal adage that "justice

delayed is justice denied." This also entails according the proposed bureau jurisdictional powers to investigate complaints on the premises as soon as they are received.

Prosecuting employers for violating the basic human rights of maids must also be judicially swift. In order to facilitate the administration of justice in this domain, the legislation on the working conditions of maids must be detailed enough and in line with international standards, as prescribed by the International Labour Office (ILO).

Jordan is treaty obligated to respect and implement all the relevant ILO conventions on the employment of domestic help and any shortcomings on our part in that direction could be the subject of an international censorship.

"Jordan is treaty obligated to respect and implement all the relevant ILO conventions on the employment of domestic help and any shortcomings on our part in that direction could be the subject of an international censorship."

At the same time, it is high time that local human rights groups take up the human rights situation of domestic help. No human rights organisation is worth its name if it shies away from this burning issue.

It is amazing that no local chapter of human rights associations has seen fit to start a campaign for the protection of the human rights of the girls and women who work in our houses. It is had enough that the government has been woefully derelict in its duties in this regard. We, the people who are being served by foreign maids, should rectify this ongoing shortcoming by starting forthwith a crusade to protect them from abuse and visibly unfair treatment. Otherwise, this double state-private neglect will continue to send the wrong message that all maids in this country are not treated as human beings whose rights should be addressed.

It would be refreshing if we, the people, took the lead in this domain so that the government may follow in our footsteps. This would be the people's finest hour in the defence of human rights which we speak so much about.

LETTERS

Jordan-German cooperation not nearing end

To the Editor:

I READ with interest Dr. H. Jorgan's article "Europe-Near East cooperation: The policy of the EU member states is to respond as partners to the expectations of the Arab World" (Jordan Times, Jan. 26, 1997), that touches briefly on German cooperation with Jordan.

Dr. Jorgan's appraisal of the German cooperation with Jordan and of its impact on the Jordanians is indeed very modest. I have had the opportunity to interact with the cooperation programme with Germany for a decade and a half prior to my leaving government service in 1987. I can say that the positive impact of German assistance to Jordan has been profound, and the cooperation programme itself has been consistent and sustained. The Jordanians will always hold in high regard the consideration and concern the Germans have demonstrated towards the Kingdom in good and lean times. It is with this feeling of a Jordanian that I allow myself to comment on Dr. Jorgan's illuminating but modest article.

Dr. Jorgan says: "Comparing the countries of the Near East with each other, one's attention is caught by the extreme imbalances which exist regarding natural resources, fresh water resources and the capacity to generate revenue." While this observation is half right, attention should be directed towards the population-resources equation for the countries of the region, the key factor behind the disparities he referred to. Jordan, in this regard, stands at "the bottom of the rotten pole," especially when it comes to renewable fresh water resources per capita. At a meagre 170 cubic metres per capita per year today (14 per cent of its need), Jordan is well below the absolute poverty line.

Actually, the total water resources of Jordan have been fluctuating around a stationary average for over 20 centuries throughout which Jordanians sustained a good livelihood with an agricultural economic base. It is today's unprecedented population level and the requirements of good living standards that made the difference.

2. Dr. Jorgan observes that the Near East region has a high rate of refugees, some 30 per cent of all world refugees. Averages actually distort the pattern of refugees distribution. One does not need to be reminded that the region's refugees are primarily the Palestinians that were evicted from their homeland in 1948, not to mention those that were displaced to Jordan in 1967 and in 1990. Again, on this score, Jordan takes pride that, among the countries of the region, UNRWA records show that it has been host to the highest percentage of Palestinian refugees.

3. Regrettably, Dr. Jorgan states, as far as Jordan is concerned, that "the sewage system, as well as sewage treatment, enjoys special attention because only treated 'waste' water will be available for agricultural irrigation in the future." Such an outright conclusion is backed only by casual supply-demand forecasts for municipal and industrial water, without any regard to the agricultural demands. I have heard urban Jordanians advocate that absolute priority in water allocation is for municipal water, followed by industrial water needs and at the tertiary end, the

requirements of agriculture. This suggests that man can live by keeping good domestic hygienic standards, drinking a bit, gardening around his house and washing his car. Tertiary consideration is given to his stomach needs. I have yet to meet a woman or a man who can maintain a living standard of any level doing just that. Additionally, one has to remember that replacing current irrigation water with treated waste water will not assure sustainability of existing irrigated areas, nor would the quality of pure effluent be fit for use in unrestricted agriculture.

Not only do some Jordanians advocate that, I have also seen recipes advanced to Jordan by several lending institutions doing the same thing. I have not, however, laid eyes on any sober analysis of the real cost of reducing the areas of irrigated agriculture. I venture to suggest that this real cost will be higher than the marginal cost of supply of desalinated brackish water to urban areas. The cost of dislocation of people that have depended on irrigated agriculture for millennia is not small, neither will their retreating to qualify for urban jobs be easy. In the meantime, the state has to cope with a category of "lost people," maybe another category of "refugees."

4. I was surprised by the size of the technical assistance package contributed by the Federal Republic of Germany to Jordan. Dr. Jorgan put this at one billion Deutsch marks (DM) since 1977, and it is about the same amount as the financial assistance package ever since. I have a pretty good idea about the valuable yields of the financial package and its socio-economic impact. Electrification of the Jordan Valley, domestic water supply to the southern Jordan Valley and the Hisban-Kafrin irrigation scheme are but a few examples whose aggregate cost did not exceed DM 35 million. The returns from the three projects alone outweighs the returns from most of technical assistance package of one billion DM since 1977.

5. Finally, I agree wholeheartedly with Dr. Jorgan on the EU priorities for the future, but I would like to suggest that the technical cooperation in agriculture with Jordan has not reached the absorptive capacity of the Jordanians, as the article suggests. It should be at another starting stage at this age of biotechnological revolution. I further desire to suggest that the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) take the necessary measure to drastically improve the yield per one million DM of technical cooperation funds. It is good for Jordan, and it is better for the German taxpayer whom Jordanians hold in high esteem.

Dr. Munther Haddadin,
Amman.

The Jordan Times welcomes letters and contributions from its readers on any subject they wish to tackle. Letters intended for publication, however, should contain the writer's full name and preferably address as well. Names can be withheld only upon request and under special circumstances. Letters are subject to editing. The newspaper is not responsible for the return of unused manuscripts.

By Rami G. Khouri
Special to the Jordan Times

A SECOND season of excavations in 1996 by a team of archaeologists headed by Dr. S. Thomas Parker of North Carolina State University (U.S.) has finally resolved the mystery of the location of the Nabataean/Roman/Byzantine town at Ajlun.

Excavations elsewhere in Ajlun in recent years have uncovered the early Islamic town and a major settlement from the Iron Age — but the nearly 1,000 years in between have always been a blank spot in the city's archaeological record. Dr. Parker's work has now identified and partially exposed significant urban remains of the town that existed at Ajlun during the late Nabataean, Roman and Byzantine periods. Among the most significant finds from his 1994 and 1996 seasons are large sections of the fortified Roman-Byzantine city walls, a probable Byzantine bathhouse and cemetery and a Nabataean ceramics industry.

Ajlun was the name of the city in the Nabataean/Roman-Byzantine era (the Islamic era city has been called Ajlun, spelled with a "j" to distinguish between the two adjacent sites).

The mystery of Roman Ajlun location was highlighted by known historical references to the city that frequently played a strategic role in the geo-politics and commerce of this region. An Iron Age port-town known as Ezragaba in the Bible existed in this region; it may be the ancient town, excavated earlier this century at Tell Al Khelateh, north-west of modern Ajlun in the former no man's land between Jordan and Israel. Tell Al Khelateh was abandoned in the 4th century BC, and there is no evidence of a Hellenistic occupation of the region between the 4th and 1st centuries BC, though Rhodian stamped coin hoards from around 200 BC found at Tell Al Khelateh hint at a Hellenistic presence in the area.

Plinius, writing in the 1st century BC, mentions Ajlun as a Nabataean city, and in the early 1st century AD the Roman writer Strabo mentions Ajlun as a "polis" or city. Strabo mentions that merchants from Ajlun required 70 days

A view looking south, showing the remains of the post

Jordan stands out as biggest investor in economic and social development

Arabs keep spending high

ABU DHABI (AFP) — Arab countries are spending more than a quarter of their total expenditure on defence despite budget deficits caused by lower income.

According to official figures, spending on arms purchases, defence and security in the 22-member Arab League accounted for 25.61 per cent of their total 1995 expenditure of around \$156.69 billion.

The level has remained high over the past decade despite a sharp decline in their revenues mainly because of a drop in oil prices.

The crude export earnings of Arab oil producers plunged to nearly \$97.8 billion in 1995 from around \$212 billion in 1981, when oil prices were as high as \$30 compared with \$16.80 in 1995.

In its 1996 annual economic and social report, the Cairo-based Arab League said defence and security spending was high in all Arab states but it exceeded 30

per cent in the oil-rich Gulf and Syria, which has fought several wars against Israel and has yet to reach a peace agreement with it.

In terms of the size of defence expenditure, Saudi Arabia remained on the top of the list. Its defence and security spending accounted for 31.08 per cent of its total 1995 expenditure of around \$40 billion, meaning the Gulf kingdom spent nearly \$12.4 billion on the military sector.

Oman emerged the biggest defence spender in the Gulf in comparison to its total expenditure, with a ratio of 43.3 per cent in 1995.

Defence spending stood at 36 per cent in Qatar, 32.7 per cent in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), 29.2 per cent in Kuwait and 27.6 per cent in Bahrain.

The 360-page report, released by the Abu Dhabi-based Arab Monetary Fund (AMF), gave no figures for Iraq, which was the biggest Arab defence spender before the United Nations punished it

with crippling sanctions for its 1990 invasion of Kuwait. Saudi Arabia and its partners in the six-nation Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) have sought to bolster their armies since the 1990-91 Gulf conflict.

The report did not include figures on arms purchases by the GCC but military experts estimated them at more than \$2 billion a year.

It also provided no figures on Syria's defence expenditure for 1995 but it totalled \$4.5 per cent annually in the previous four years, the highest in the Arab World.

Defence and security spending was also high in Yemen, Jordan and Libya in 1995, standing at 41.5 per cent, 32.7 per cent and 27.8 per cent respectively. It amounted to 25.5 per cent in Morocco, 18.66 per cent in Egypt, 22.2 per cent in Mauritania, 20.5 per cent in Algeria and 17.7 per cent in Tunisia.

No figures were available for Somalia, Lebanon and Djibouti while defence expenditure accounted for 14.5 per cent in Sudan, whose coffers and army have been battered by a decade-long civil war in the south.

Between 1990 and 1995, Arab governments pumped an average 25 per cent of their spending into defence and security, meaning such expenditure totalled nearly \$245.9 billion during that period.

The report, prepared by the Arab League Secretariat, the AMF and two other regional institutions, showed Arab spending on social services accounted for 23.8 per cent and economic development for 9.1 per cent in 1995.

Spending on general services stood at 21.5 per cent and the rest was classified as other expenditures.

Jordan emerged as the biggest investor in economic and social development in 1995, with spending of around 33 per cent. Sudan was at the bottom of the list, with 17.2 per cent.

British economy strides out — OECD

PARIS (AFP) — A glowing picture of strong growth, low inflation and falling unemployment in the British economy was recently presented by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).

The British economy is accelerating and should grow at an average rate of 3.0 per cent per year from the mid 1996 to 1998, the OECD said.

Gross domestic product (GDP) should grow by 2.4 per cent in 1996, by 3.3 per cent in 1997 and by 3.0 per cent in 1998, the report said.

The organisation revised upwards figures published in May that forecast growth of 2.0 per cent in 1996 and 2.75 per cent in 1997.

The unemployment rate

might fall to 7.6 per cent in 1996 from 9.2 per cent in 1994, and to 7.0 per cent in 1998.

In the second half of 1998 the rate might fall to 6.9 per cent, the report said.

The state of employment continued to improve but at a slower rate than since the beginning of 1993.

The amount of part-time work had increased rapidly in recent years and the number of hours worked had grown by less than the number of people in work.

Public finances had been strengthened gradually but further progress was necessary in the expected public sector borrowing requirement to achieve the target set by the government of a balanced budget in the medium term.

Inflation should be less than 2.5 per cent in each of the next two years owing to a sharp rise of the value of sterling and a firming of interest rates.

Competition was strong, forcing companies to control costs and prices, and the growth of labour costs was remarkably low, the OECD said.

Profit margins had increased owing to big gains in productivity and a recent fall in the prices of non-energy raw materials.

The rise of production prices had slowed down to about 1.5 per cent in September which was the lowest figure for 29 years. Private consumption, which should grow by 2.9 per cent in 1996, would grow by 3.7 per cent next

year and by 3.0 per cent in 1998, the OECD forecast.

It was stimulated by growth of confidence, sound family finances, recovery of the housing market and low interest rates.

Manufacturing output had strengthened slightly owing to a growth of orders and improvement of confidence among business leaders.

Investment, which was expected to grow by 3.4 per cent in 1996, should accelerate sharply in 1997 and 1998 to 6.3 per cent.

The strongest growth, of 9.0 per cent in 1997 and 6.9 per cent in 1998, was expected in the sector of the construction of homes.

Other types of private investment were expected to grow by 8.1 per cent in 1997 and 7.3 per cent in 1998.

Public investment, which had fallen by 13.6 per cent in 1996, would fall by 4.6 per cent in 1997 and then grow by 0.9 per cent in 1998.

Egyptian oil supplies to Israel drop

CAIRO (AFP) — Israel slashed by more than 25 per cent its purchase of oil from Egypt in 1996 as relations between the two countries worsened over the stalled Middle East peace process.

"Israel usually imports two million tonnes of crude oil, but last year it only bought 1.4 million," Egyptian Oil Minister Hamdi Al Banbi said, without giving any reasons for the reduction.

"This was the first time that Egypt saw a drop in oil exports to Israel since

the two countries signed a peace treaty in 1979. Egypt is the main supplier of crude oil to the Jewish state.

In addition, Mr. Banbi said that after concluding an accord in principle in 1996 to export Egyptian natural gas to Turkey, "it is not yet decided whether Egypt will export gas to Israel."

"Israel has a strong interest in importing Egyptian gas because of the proximity" between the two countries, and "Egypt is not opposed to

selling it to the Jewish state."

But he added the current "Israeli government has given 'priority to the demolition of (Palestinian) houses and the construction of (Jewish) settlements and has not had time to decide if it wants to import gas from Egypt."

The Egyptian minister, however, said the door was still open to concluding a gas accord with Israel, which has said that the prices set by Cairo were too high.

REUTERS

REUTERS

The Business of Information

Major Currencies & Cross Rates									
Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY	CAD	ITL	NLG	FRF
US Dollar	1.0000	1.6280	0.6135	1.4080	118.70	1.3468	158.35	1.3288	5.4860
DE Mark	0.6143	1.0000	0.5764	0.8648	72.90	0.8280	97.06	1.1232	3.3691
GB Sterling	1.6300	2.8545	1.0000	2.2900	194.10	2.1985	258.01	2.9009	8.9422
CH Franc	0.7102	1.1554	0.4351	1.0000	84.28	0.9573	112.29	130.11	3.2835
JP Yen	0.0084	1.3704	0.0161	1.1852	1.0000	1.1354	13.37	153.94	4.6178
CA Dollar	0.7414	1.2257	0.4628	1.0875	1.14	1.0000	119.00	137.60	4.1245
IT Lira	0.0008	1.0243	0.3858	0.0888	1339.76	0.8488	1.0000	11.51	3.4517
NL Guilder	0.5468	0.8589	0.3351	0.7639	64.87	0.7373	88.19	1.0000	2.9386
FR Franc	0.1823	0.2987	0.1117	0.2580	21.82	0.2458	33.32	33.3200	1.0000

Energy		
Oil	Last	Previous
Brent	23.35	23.75
W. Texas	23.80	23.80
Bony	23.35	23.75
Dubai	20.42	20.58
UL Gas	20.00	20.00

Mid-East Currencies				
Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	JPY
SA Riyal	0.2688	0.4344	0.18359	31.8778
AE Dirham	0.2723	0.44356	0.18705	32.3488
KW Dinar	3.3158	5.40249	2.03417	4.87071
BF Dinar	0.3770	0.62152	1.82734	37.9892
CY Pound	2.0374	3.3168	1.2492	2.8687

Metal Prices		
Metal	Bid	Offer
Gold (oz's)	352.7	353.2
Silver (oz's)	4.97	4.98
Platinum (oz's)	358.25	359.25
AL (3 Months)	1639	1642
CU (3 Months)	2253	2258
Zinc (3 Months)	1135	1139
Lead (3 Months)	897	900
NI (3 Months)	7280	7290

Currency Deposit Rates (Bid)					
Cncy	1 Month	3 Months	6 Months	9 Months	1 Year
USD	5.31	5.43	5.58	5.78	5.81
GBP	8.12	8.25	8.56	8.66	8.75
JPY	0.90	0.29	0.32	0.31	0.53
DEM	2.91	3.03	3.03	2.91	3.08
FRF	3.25	3.25	3.23	3.25	3.25
CHF	1.58	1.58	1.53	1.62	1.68
ITL	7.27	7.08	8.77	8.53	6.38

Main Equity Indices						
Bourse	Index	Value	Chng	% Chng	High	Low
New York	DOW JONES	8898.48	-59.27	-0.68	8759.98	8862.33
New York	S&P 500	770.52	-7.04	-0.91	778.21	777.56
London	FT-SE 100	4218.8	-52.7	-1.23	4251.3	4215.7
Tokyo	NIKKEI 225	17889.36	-220.1	-1.23	17893.9	17541.2
Paris	CAC 40	2430.34	-30.91	-1.26	2442.49	2422.8
Frankfurt	DAX	2998.24	-35.22	-1.18	3006.78	2990.87

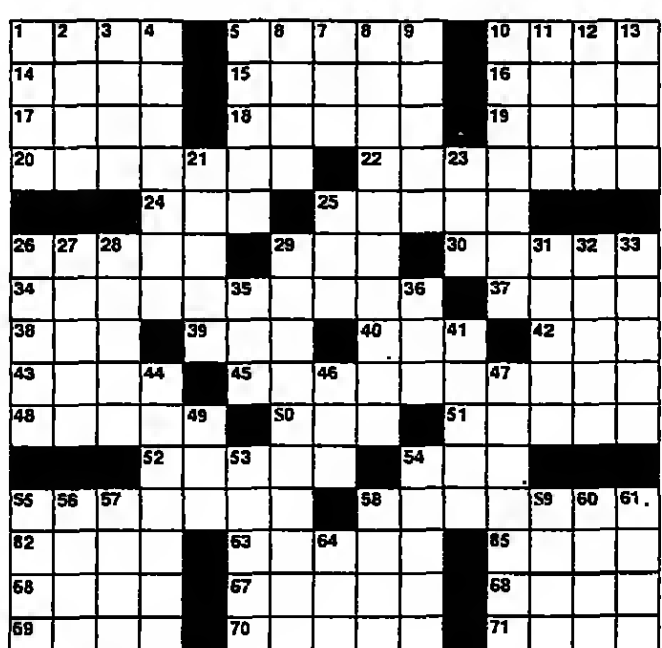
Energy		
Commodity	Last	Delivery
Coffee (c/lbs)	144.33	Spot
Cocoa (\$/ton)	1330	Spot
Sugar (\$/ton)	298.8	Spot
Wheat (\$/ton)	132	Spot
Soya (c/lbs)	22.71	Spot
Tea (\$/lb)	115	Spot
Barley (\$/bsh)	2.15	Spot
Rice (\$/ton)	470	Spot

JOD Cross Rates			
Currency	Buy	Sell	
US Dollar	0.708	0.710	
GB Sterling	1.1558	1.1596	
DE Mark	0.4349	0.4371	
CH Franc	0.5029	0.5054	
FR Franc	0.1289	0.1295	
JP Yen	0.5963	0.5993	
NL Guilder	0.3873	0.3892	
IT Lira	0.4458	0.448	

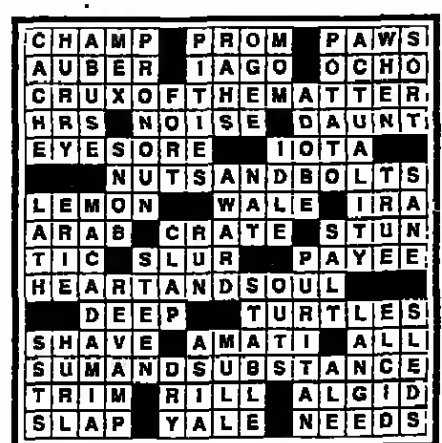
* Source: Central Bank of Jordan.

THE Daily Crossword

- ACROSS
- Gambol
 - Dupe
 - Take forty winks
 - Part of T.A.E.
 - Sirident
 - Acknowledge
 - Approach
 - Chalcedony
 - Decrease gradually
 - Certain boarding places
 - "Balm"
 - character
 - Lodge member
 - French philosopher
 - Corsican patriot
 - about town
 - Insurgent
 - Early settler in Britain
 - Arrangement
 - Nothing
 - Levy
 - Greatest degree
 - Long long —
 - Ledger entry
 - With assiduity
 - Was concerned
 - Singer Davis
 - Established
 - Attach
 - in (confine)
 - Altar space
 - Tranquil
 - Unfeeling
 - Actor David
 - Legislator Sonny
 - Lake port
 - African capital
 - Othello's "friend"
 - Put on
 - Boredom
 - Porters



by William Canine



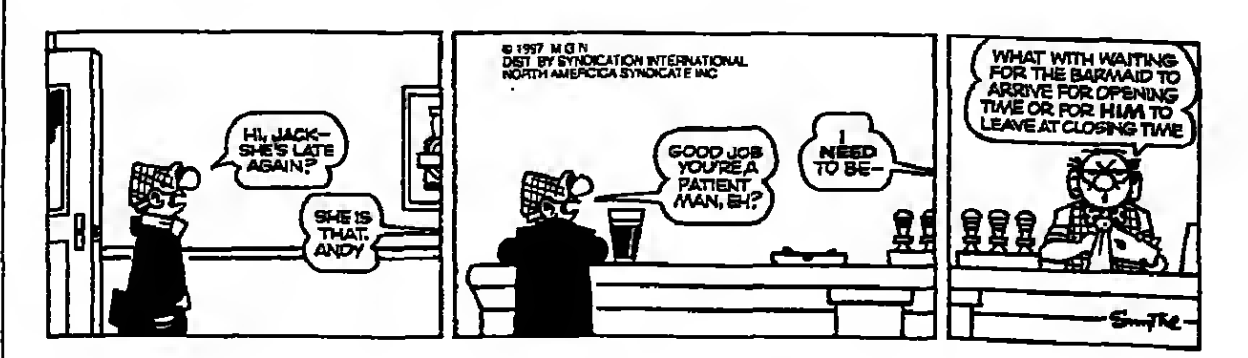
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- DOWN
- Scuttled
 - Swiss painter
 - A "terrible" czar
 - Irish patriot
 - Classroom need
 - Beldams
 - Time span
 - Enormous
 - Possessive
 - Loitered
 - Ellipse
 - Region
 - Pitcher
 - Part of T.S.E.
 -
 - Rosenkavalier
 - Woodwind
 - Inventor
 - Funk
 - Eikberg
 - Peeping Tom
 - Maxican emperor
 - Troncons
 - Colonel's insignia
 - Actor
 - Christopher
 - Downhearted
 - Pick at
 - Sailing vessel
 - Ramble
 - Remiss
 - Site of
 - Windhoek
 - Pilot's award
 - Barrier
 - Red River city
 - Munch
 - Lepord
 - Oratorio high point
 - Site of Cuzco
 - Paddock baby
 - "Picnic" author
 - Dove sounds
 - Coq au —

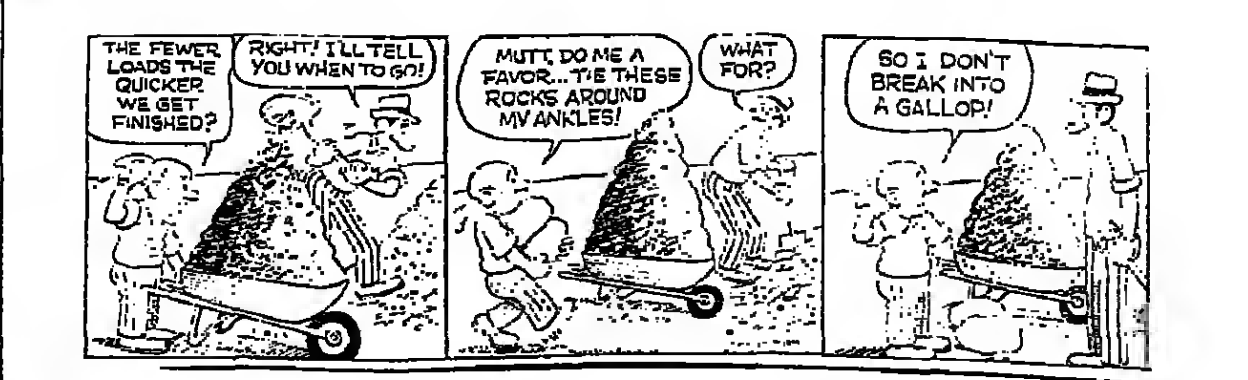
Peanuts



Andy Capp



Mutt'n' Jeff



HOROSCOPE FORECAST FOR MONDAY, JANUARY 27, 1997

By Thomas S. Pierson, Astrologer, Carroll Righter Foundation

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) Decide just which policies you wish to follow today in both personal and business matters and then follow them. Later this evening you can seek the advice of a bigwig and propose a method of operation for your success.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) If you are charming today and show you are an expert you can get along fine with persons in business, so make whatever progress is necessary. Later this evening you can meet with close friends and have a wonderful time.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) This is a good morning today to meet with fellow associates and discuss joint matters which concern everyone's success. Plan how to improve your status in public life and decide what method of operation will be used.

MOON CHILDREN: (June 22 to July 21) You have fine ideas today for making your surroundings more charming and functional for your loved ones and those who come to visit. Later this evening you can consult with knowledgeable people and devise a plan of action.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) Use your talents more wisely today and be practical in handling your affairs. Buy a nice gift for the one you love and he or she will be in a very romantic mood as a result of your generous offer of appreciation and respect.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) If you are tactful and sweet at home today, you can settle any family matters peacefully. Get your creative ideas across towards fellow associates who are willing to provide you with the advice which you need to succeed.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 23) Be direct in showing a newcomer today that you are friendly so that he or she will assist you in your career activities. The evening is ideal for entertaining guest in your home, so make these people most comfortable.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) The evening today is the best time for communicating with others, so make the effort to have intensive discussions. Handle all of your assets more wisely and thereby you will have additional funds for the lean times ahead.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) Plan intimate activities with your mate and loved ones for the days ahead. Delve into practical matters with enthusiasm later this evening and you can make your career activities more productive for those involved.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) Your imagination is working fine today, so that you can devise some plan of action which will be quite productive. Enjoy the romantic side of life and then be with good friends who are willing to assist you with a new project.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) Take that trip with your mate and loved ones which is important to you and has been put off for some time. Be more practical where a secret desire is concerned and which can make you quite successful if put in motion.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) Contact influential people today and get advice on how best to handle your important affairs. Be charming towards bigwigs and knowledgeable people who have the ability to make your career activities most successful.

Birthstone of January: Garnet — Rose Quartz.

No decision increasing cement — Ab

evaluation by a committee of industry and trade ministers and the pointed out that the actual cost for production. The minister explained that the price of cement has not yet reached a level of stability and is still under study.

Reliable sources at the Jordan Cement Company denied that there is a plan to raise the price of cement. The subject of price increase was not yet reached by the committee, which does not have a final decision on the matter.

An official at the company, however, said that the company has submitted a request to the government to raise the price of cement. The official said that the company has been taking a loss since the start of the year and is now in a difficult financial position.

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According to a contractor, the price of cement has increased by 13 per cent in the last few months. The contractor said that the increase in the price of cement has made it difficult for him to complete his work.

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Daily Beat

A review of news from the Arabic press

No decision yet on increasing price of cement — Abdul Ragheb

**** CEMENT PRICES** are still under study and evaluation by a committee representing the ministries of industry and trade, supply and finance, Industry and Trade Minister Ali Abul Ragheb has said. He pointed out that no decision has been taken on raising the prices and if any, it would reflect the actual cost for production materials and electricity. The minister explained that the committee has not yet reached a decision either to increase or lower cement prices and stressed that the "issue is still under study."

Reliable sources at the Jordan Cement Factories Company denied that there is any intention at present to raise prices of cement. The sources indicated that the subject of price increase was not on the agenda for a review by the Council of Ministers. "However that does not mean or deny that the company has submitted many requests to the government to raise the prices," the sources said noting at the same time that "what has been said recently is nothing more than rumours."

An official at the company said a decision has not been taken yet to take loans from the International Finance Corporation (IFC) which, in a recent study, highly commended the company for its industrial efficiency, technical management and future opportunities in terms of internal and external markets. The official said the company borrows about JD20 million annually from local credit institutions at extremely high interest rate that reaches 14.5 per cent. "But if the IFC offers safer terms and lower interest, the company might turn to it," the official added.

Some of the reasons for JD42 in the local market while the export is \$42 per tonne although the price varies to prices of competitors in side markets. The price of cement was increased by 13 per cent five years ago and according to market dealers any increase this time would directly affect construction costs and may harm some contractors in the private sector as investors are likely to keep away from investing in housing projects.

"According to a contractor, the construction market is currently in a recession and, as such, any increase in the prices of cement would only make things 'unbearable' (Al Aswaj).

Employment Opportunity

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Qualifications:

1. University degree (Finance, Accounting or Marketing) with strong analytical skills.
2. Minimum of 5 years work experience in the private sector.
3. Excellent communicator and a team player, highly creative and resourceful.
4. Computer literate, (the accounting specialist will set up and manage a computerised bookkeeping service for our clients)

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Amman - 11183, Jordan
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Airbus Industrie banks on Asia to spur 'Superjumbo' project

SINGAPORE (AFP) — Airbus Industrie is banking on Asian airlines to fuel the development of the world's largest commercial plane, analysts and officials said after Boeing Co. dropped out of the "Superjumbo" dogfight.

Singapore Airlines Ltd. expressed disappointment at Boeing's decision, saying it had a "definite need" for the plane while Cathay Pacific Airways Ltd. of Hong Kong said it was still interested in aircraft in the 500- to 600-seat range.

"Demand for an aircraft of this size is being largely driven by airlines of the

Asia-Pacific region, and this could amount to some 550 aircraft in the region over the next 20 years," said Airbus regional spokesman Sean Lee.

Mr. Lee told AFP here the region was the "most important" market for the proposed 550-seat A3XX, which the European consortium wants to launch next year and put in service by 2003 at a development cost of \$8 billion.

"The interest we have been having from the airlines we have been talking to is very encouraging and for that reason we are proceeding with confidence in

our studies as planned," he said.

"If Boeing has scrapped its plans, it means that Airbus will be alone in this market," Mr. Lee added.

Airbus' U.S. rival Boeing said recently that "sufficient market demand has not yet developed to justify committing the significant investment required" to continued development of a 747 accommodating 550 passengers.

Airbus Industrie forecasts a market for 1,380 airlines of 500 seats and above, worth some \$300 billion, in the years to 2014.

Of these, more than one-third would be delivered to Asia-Pacific airlines, with the aircraft flying primarily on routes linking Asia with Europe, trans-Pacific and trans-Atlantic services and high-density domestic and regional services.

Singapore Airlines (SIA), one of the world's most profitable airlines, has urged manufacturers to speed up the development of a Superjumbo to enable carriers to cope with growing air and airport congestion.

It said it could buy six of

them.

"We are naturally disappointed with Boeing's decision to shelve plans to build the larger-capacity versions of the B747 Jumbo jets," said Karmjit Singh, the airline's corporate affairs assistant director.

"SIA has a definite need for some of the Superjumbos particularly at congested slot-constrained international gateways," he said.

He said he hoped that Boeing would reconsider its decision. "Otherwise, Airbus Industrie may fill the vacuum."

In Hong Kong, Cathay Pacific spokesman Kwan Chuk-Fai said the airline was still interested in buying a Superjumbo but would be very cautious about the cost.

"We haven't made up our minds whether to order any. We have indicated our interest to both constructors, but there's no plan yet (to buy). You are talking about huge investments here, so the economics have to be right, the numbers have to be right, first," Mr. Kwan added.

The Airbus A3XX would

be priced at about \$198 million.

Malaysia Airlines System BHD. Chairman Tajudin Ramli said in September that airline was considering buying Superjumbo aircraft as part of its plan to phase out smaller aircraft.

"The minimum order for each launch customer is six, so that will probably be the number of orders we will place," he said.

Philippine Airlines official Jaime Bautista said in Manila the Superjumbo was "too big for our needs" while Air India spokesman J. Bhargava said in Bombay that medium-capacity, long-range aircraft are "good enough for us."

Taiwan Airlines had no plans to buy any Superjumbos, officials said in Taipei, while a spokesman for Australian carrier Qantas said in Sydney it had made no plans to buy Boeing's Superjumbo.

A spokesman for Japan Airlines Co. Ltd. said it was one of the carriers talking to Boeing "about this airplane, but we didn't get as far as making any option or placing any orders."

In future, there may well

be need for a bigger aircraft, but the situation is very fluid," he said.

Korean Air spokesman Seo Kang-Yoon commented in Seoul that the "world-wide market has not yet ripened for huge airliners such as Superjumbo jets."

Analysts in Singapore said, however, that future demand for a large-capacity plane on long-haul, non-stop routes could not be ruled out amid moves towards relaxed restrictions on aviation services.

"I am sure that Boeing did a feasibility study, but what I am hearing from airlines is that there is potential for a very long-haul aircraft that could do Hong Kong-New York, Singapore-New York, for instance," an aviation analyst said.

"At the moment the U.S. is holding talks with Singapore and could also hold talks with Malaysia, Taiwan, South Korea and New Zealand on open skies," he added.

"That is something which in the long run, if it is approved, could strongly stimulate traffic on the trans-Pacific."

Bank deposits soar in Lebanon

BEIRUT (AFP) — The total deposits of Lebanon's 80 commercial banks soared by nearly 30 per cent last year, the governor of the central bank said Sunday.

Total deposits of Lebanon, Arab, European and American banks operating in the country rose by 28.5 per cent in 1996 over the previous year to \$19.7 billion. Central Bank of Lebanon chief Riad Salame told AFP.

Mr. Salame said bank deposits have doubled over the past three years and were an important indicator of renewed confidence in the Lebanese economy, devastated by the 1975-1990 civil war.

Lebanon's banks have played a significant role in the reconstruction of the war-ravaged country once considered the banking capital of the Middle East.

Mr. Salame said the country's banks doled out loans totalling \$8.1 billion to the private sector last year, up from \$6.5 billion in 1995.

Meanwhile, Banque du Liban et d'Outre Mer (BLOM) became the second Beirut bank to announce a big year-end capital increase and bankers said the trend would put pressure on a host of smaller banks to increase capital or merge.

BLOM followed Banque de la Mediterranee of billionaire Prime Minister Rafik Al Hariri in reporting that it had doubled capital at the end of 1996.

It said shareholders' equity had been increased from \$77 million to over \$150 million. This put it in second place behind Mediterranean whose chairman Mustafa Razian said it had increased capital from \$102 million to \$220 million.

Mediterranee ranked as Lebanon's top bank in 1995 by most criteria except for customer deposits in which BLOM was biggest. Both had total assets of around \$1.9 billion at end 1995.

BLOM also said in a statement announcing the capital increase that it had acquired all shares in Paris-based Banque Banorabe-France which has branches in London, Dubai, Sharjah and Muscat and wholly owns Geneva-based Banque Banorient-Suisse.

This made BLOM "the Lebanese bank with the largest presence in major European and Arab financial centres," it said.

The capital increases set Mediterranean and BLOM apart as the giants of Lebanon's crowded banking sector, with Banque Audi trailing in third place with \$63 million capital. Only six other banks have shareholders' equity of more than \$20 million.

The big two have increased capital sharply following Lebanon's 1975-90 civil war. Since 1993 BLOM's capital has jumped from \$19 million to \$150 million and Mediterranean from \$15 million to \$212 million. Mediterranean's Razian says his target is \$500 million by the year 2,000.

BLOM did not immediately say how it carried out its latest capital increase, but Mr. Razian said Mediterranean's came from 1996 profits of about \$20 million and in cash from its shareholder, Mr. Hariri.

The approach of the big two appeared to differ from other dynamic banks like Audi, Byblos Bank and Banque Libanaise pour le Commerce which in the past 17 months have raised capital through public or private share issues on the local and international markets.

A dealer with another Beirut bank said the BLOM and Mediterranean increases the gap between Lebanon's bigger banks and the host of smaller, family-owned institutions, many of which had capital of only \$2-\$3 million.

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HOUSING BANK CENTER AMMAN - SHERMAN										
TELEPHONE: 607171 / 607179										
ORGANIZED MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR SUNDAY 26/01/1997										
PART 12 MONTHS HIGH	COMPANY'S NAME	P / E	DIV.	NO. OF TRANSA.	NO. OF SHARES	VALUE TRADED JD	OPEN PRICE	CLOSE PRICE	CHANGE	
261.000	205.000	ARAB BANK	14.0	1.37	7	200	51200	256.25	256.00	-25-
3.500	4.250	CAIRO AMMAN BANK	10.3	3.00	1	300	1500	5.10	5.00	-10-
1.210	.880	MID. EAST INV. BK.	76.2	0.00	7	2400	2765	1.16	1.16	-
5.930	4.250	THE HOUSING BK.	12.5	2.95	2	110	534	4.71	4.68	-03-
2.950	2.440	JOR. KUWAIT BANK	19.3	0.00	4	246	656	2.69	2.67	-02-
1.080	.880	JOR. CUP. BANK	5.7	7.29	2	500	478	.95	.96	+01-
4.180	3.480	J.R. ISLAMIC BANK	18.3	0.00	23	5535	21030	3.78	3.81	+03+
1.450	1.000	FIN. LABEL. INV. BK.	9	0.00	6	2325	3001	1.30	1.30	-
BANK SECTOR TOTALS INDEX: 195.21 CHNG: -0.09										
1.740	1.390	ABRIAN SEAS INSUR.	12.1	4.55	1	750	1238	1.74	1.65	-09-
2.800	2.300	GENERAL ARAB INSUR.	73.2	0.00	2	128	294	2.30	2.30	-
4.550	4.000	JERUSALEM INSUR.	11.5	4.71	1	100	425	4.25	4.25	-
INSURANCE SECTOR TOTALS INDEX: 120.10 CHNG: -0.33										
1.830	1.450	J.O.R. ELECTRIC PWR.	11.3	7.35	9	4776	7785	1.63	1.63	-
5.600	4.200	ARAB INTL. HOTELS	18.2	2.79	8	60250	27143	4.50	4.50	-10+
1.620	1.080	NATL. PORTFOLIO	9	0.00	4	1050	1250	1.20	1.20	-
1.050	.820	RAL ESTATE INV.	19.3	0.00	2	375	326	.88	.87	-01-
2.200	1.490	M.O. EAST HOTELS	65.5	0.00	1	250	380	1.53	1.52	-01-
3.720	3.130	ARAB INTL. INV. EDUC.	13.9	5.68	2	350	1232	3.55	3.52	-03-
1.220	.960	KARAK EDUCATION	8	0.00	6	1540	1616	1.05	1.05	-
1.200	.820	UNION LAND DEV.	8	0.00	4	11000	9335	.85	.85	-
SERVICE SECTOR TOTALS INDEX: 112.08 CHNG: +0.29										
5.730	3.060	JOR. CEMENT FACT.	19.4	2.94	32	4396	14858	3.35	3.40	+05+
2.500	2.710	JOR. PHOSPHATE MINES	36.9	0.00	12	45527	154756	3.40	3.40	-
5.600	4.950	ARAB POTASH CO.	17.9	3.39	6	797	4698	5.86	5.90	+04+
10.400	8.720	JOR. PETROL. REFINERY	10.1	7.99	19	3240	32356	9.95	10.01	+06+
3.560	1.650	INDUSTRIAL COMM. CORP.	34.3	0.00	11	3630	9273	2.60	2.52	-05-
4.580	3.040	ARAB PHARM. MANF.	20.0	5.48	7	1550	3255	3.64	3.65	+01+
7.150	4.250	ORP. ALUMINA DV. IND.	12.9	4.26	7	1400	5633	4.80	4.70	-10-
.960	.450	L. ESTOCK & POULTRY	9	0.00	8	9500	5800	.62	.62	-
1.440	1.050	ARAB PAPER CONV. TRD.	8.1	8.70	1	200	238	1.21	1.19	-02-
1.020	.540	NATIONAL INDUS.	9.2	8.55	11	3850	2550	.57	.57	-
INDUSTRIAL SECTOR TOTALS INDEX: 117.10 CHNG: +0.45										
GRAND TOTAL INDEX: 154.03 CHNG: +0.14										
PARALLEL MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR SUNDAY 26/01/1997										
.800	.500	JOR. TRADE PAC.	14.4	0.00	5	2250	1200	.54	.54	-
.890	.700	UNION INV. SOF.	68.9	0.00	1	2000	440	.73	.72	-01-
.950	.370	ARAB FIN. INVEST.	25.3	0.00	2	2000	900	.45	.45	-
.640	.300	J.C. IND. MATCH-JEMCO	9	0.00	7	7500	2250	.30	.30	-
.800	.510	ARAB FOOD & MED.	8	0.00	1	200	124	.62	.62	-
1.690	1.300	NATL. CHLORINE	8	0.00	2	1700	3325	1.38	1.37	-01-
.450	.690	ARAB INTL. INV. TRD.	9	0.00	1	1000	480	.48	.48	-
.860	.520	NATL. TEXTILE	9	0.00	3	4300	2317	.54	.54	-
.920	.400	NATL. MULT. ENG. NAMED	8	0.00	10	18750	9188	.50	.49	-01-
.740	.430	KAYAKR DIES & MOULDS	14	0.00	14	22000	12105	.54	.56	+02+
.990	.720	JORDAN STEEL	8	0.00	3	2050	1558	.76	.76	-
.760	.620	MOBATEL PHARM. 75%	8	0.00	1	750	285	.64	.63	-01-
.750	.390	INDS. ENG.	27.7	0.00	20	35100	15795	.45	.45	-
1.260	.760	INDS. CERAMIC	8	0.00	3	2150	1732	.82	.80	-02-
.820	.590	NATL. POULTRY	8	0.00	5	3250	2465	.75	.77	+02+
.950	.530	MID. EAST COMPLEX	7.7	0.00	11	8000	5263	.66	.66	-
GRAND TOTAL										
							89	113000	58429	
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Waddle sees off Everton

LONDON (AFP) — Former England star Chris Waddle scored one of the goals of his career on Saturday as he inspired First Division strugglers Bradford City to a stunning 3-2 win over 1995 FA Cup winners Everton in the fourth round of the FA Cup.

The 36-year-old former Newcastle and Olympique Marseille star, capped 62 times by England, set up the other two goals as Bradford, currently 22nd in the First Division, inflicted Everton's sixth successive defeat.

Bradford were not the only giant-killers as Second Division Wrexham were celebrating after dumping Premiership side West Ham out of the FA Cup in their delayed third round replay with a dramatic last-minute winner.

The modest Welsh side who knocked out Arsenal in 1992, sparked wild celebrations among their 3,000 travelling fans when substitute Kevin Russell, a 10-club journeyman, struck from 20 yards.

Hundreds of angry West Ham fans invaded the pitch at the final whistle to shout angry abuse at the directors' box before moving to the far end of the pitch and applauding their rivals from North Wales.

Non-league Woking were also uncorking the champagne in the communal bath after earning a replay with Premiership side and 1987 winners Coventry with a 1-1 draw at Highfield Road.

And crisis club Middlesbrough narrowly escaped one of the biggest upsets in the history of the Cup with late goals from Fabrizio Ravanelli and Jan-Age Fjoroft sealing a 3-



Manchester United soccer star Ole Gunnar Solskjaer (L) of Norway is tackled by Wimbledon's captain Vinnie Jones. Manchester drew 1-1 with Wimbledon in the FA Cup game at Old Trafford (Reuters photo).

2 comeback win against part-timers Hedsnesford.

Waddle was in jubilant mood after his stunning 35 yard chip helped Bradford, appearing in the fourth round for the first time since 1989, to the win over Everton.

He said: "I have never been a giant-killer before — it's a nice feeling. I've scored some great goals in my career but that is up there with the best of them."

Coventry boss Gordon Strachan made no attempt to hide his disgust at his side's performance after RAF serviceman Steve Thompson set up a replay with a last-minute strike for part-timers Woking.

Strachan said: "I have tried to defend my players, sometimes blindly. But I've no defence today."

Middlesbrough boss Bryan Robson admitted he was "relieved to say the least" after his side avoided a replay with the amateurs of Hedsnesford, who were assembled at a cost of just 20,000 pounds — less than half the weekly wage of Boro striker Ravanelli.

Manchester United, whose last defeat in the FA Cup was at the hands of Everton in the 1995 final, boss Alex Ferguson paid tribute to Wimbledon's fighting spirit after a goal in the dying seconds by Robbie Earle cancelled out Paul Scholes' effort a minute earlier and set up a fourth round replay at Selhurst Park.

Elsewhere, Aston Villa, whose Premiership challenge has collapsed in recent weeks, were dumped out of the Cup by Midlands rivals, Derby, 3-1.

Sheffield Wednesday eased through with a 2-0 win over Second Division Carlisle in the fourth round while Rod Wallace's fine

42nd-minute strike gave Leeds side a 1-0 third round replay win over First Division Crystal Palace and secured manager George Graham an Arsenal reunion in the next round.

QPR scored a 3-1 win over First Division rivals Barnsley.

Elsewhere, a goal by Kevin Francis against his former club set Birmingham City on the way to a 3-1 win over Second Division Stockport, their first loss in 12 cup ties this season, while Nicky Summerbee's 62nd minute goal gave Manchester City a 1-0 victory at Brentford.

Leicester clinched a 2-1 win over Norwich, giving their boss Martin O'Neill double cause for celebration as he saw off his old team and kept alive the possibility of two trips to Wembley after Leicester reached the League Cup semi-finals earlier in the week.

Portsmouth beat Reading 3-0.

Few mourn absence of Cowboys and 49ers

NEW ORLEANS (AFP) — Nobody here for the 31st Super Bowl is mourning the absence of the Dallas Cowboys or San Francisco 49ers.

In fact, one of the reasons for celebration is that after one of the two reached the National Football League title game six of the past eight years, two seldom-seen teams in Green Bay and New England are matched this year.

"People want to see different teams in the Super Bowl," Packer defender Reggie White said. "It's possible we could go for a while, or New England, and people would get tired of that. So it is a changing of the guard."

Seven months after pre-season workouts began, play culminates after a season of new powers topping traditional heavyweights.

Dallas, Pittsburgh, Denver and the 49ers were all ousted in the playoff quarter-finals.

"To everybody who wanted so badly for all those other teams to be in the Super Bowl — hey, they didn't make it," Packer defender Sean Jones said. "We're the best. That's how it is."

Green Bay went 13-3 in the regular season, sharing best-record honours with Denver. In addition, many figured Dallas would be improved after top receiver Michael Irvin returned from a five-game suspension.

"Two other teams were supposed to be here — Dallas and Denver," Jones said. "It doesn't make any difference what we do. We don't belong here as far as a lot of people are concerned."

Carl Lewis to retire in June

SYDNEY (AFP) — U.S. Olympic track legend Carl Lewis is to retire this summer.

"I intend to make my final race at Houston in June," said the 35-year-old here on Sunday. "This will be my last season."

"Physically, I could continue for another three to four years but the mental pressure is harder. I don't know what it's going to feel like not being on the track any more but I'm not going to sever my connection with the sport or with the Olympics," added Lewis, here for Monday's Sydney Athletics Grand Prix meeting.

Lewis, one of the greatest athletes ever, has made every United States Olympic team since 1980 and was voted track and field athlete of the decade in the 1980s.

"I have had to adjust to people coming to see Carl the legend over the years but

everyone realises you're not going to win every race," he said.

Lewis said that after his farewell tour he planned to continue his involvement in charity work with handicapped children.

As well as his nine Olympic titles, Lewis has won eight world championship gold medals, set seven world records and recorded 65 straight victories in the long jump between 1981 and 1991.

"This tour is giving me an opportunity to run in places where I've not competed before, starting with New Zealand and Australia, where fans can see me and I can get a better look at some of these countries," he said.

Lewis will face a strong Australian field of sprinters on Monday including internationals Dean Capobianco, Steve Brimacombe and newcomer Patrick Johnson.

Jazz beat Houston in OT

HOUSTON (R) — Karl Malone scored 27 points, John Stockton added 26 and the Utah Jazz used a 7-0 run in overtime to claim a 105-100 road victory over the first-place Houston Rockets Saturday in one of the NBA's best rivalries.

Bryon Russell had 16 points for the Jazz, who won for the sixth time in seven games and climbed within 2 1/2 games of the Rockets for the top spot in the Midwest Division.

"They are a better team than we are in several ways, but we don't give up in what we do," Jazz coach Jerry Sloan said. "We executed and played great defence and got some clutch shots. Russell was outstanding."

Hakeem Olajuwon scored a season-high 41 points and grabbed 15 rebounds and Clyde Drexler had 21 for Houston, which was outscored in the extra period, 14-9.

Houston's Charles Barkley, who missed the last four games with a sprained ankle, came within two assists of a triple double. He had 10 points, 11 rebounds and eight assists.

"Utah is one of the few teams that can challenge us,"

Barkley said. "They are physical, they have experience and they play smart. All three of those added up to a win tonight."

Stockton had 11 assists and a career-high six steals for the Jazz, who hit 47 per cent of their three-point attempts. Russell led the way from long range, going 4-for-7.

"This rivalry is one of mutual respect," Stockton said. "Every time we play these guys, it comes down to the last few seconds."

In Atlanta, Mookie Blaylock scored 24 points and Steve Smith added 18 as the Hawks held off the Boston Celtics 95-90 for their 19th straight home victory.

The Hawks won for the 12th time in 13 games overall.

In Chicago, Michael Jordan scored 24 points as the Bulls built a 23-point lead and cruised to their 14th straight home win, 110-98 over the Toronto Raptors.

Toni Kukoc added 18 points and a career-high 13 rebounds for the Bulls, who improved to a league-best 21-1 at home with their 12th win in 13 games overall. Chicago avenged losses in its last two meetings with Toronto.

In Cleveland, Terrell Brandon scored 21 points and Donny Marshall had a career-high 17 as the Cavaliers snapped a four-game home losing streak, 106-73 over the Charlotte Hornets.

In Detroit, Grant Hill recorded his 14th career triple-double and third of the season with 21 points, a season-high 16 rebounds and 10 assists as the Pistons beat the Philadelphia 76ers for the 10th straight time, 104-95.

The Pistons posted their 30th win in their 41st game. Detroit reached 30 wins in its 43rd game in 1988-89 and 1989-90 en route to consecutive NBA titles.

At Washington, Rod Strickland scored eight of his 21 points in a decisive fourth-quarter run as the Bullets snapped a three-game losing streak, 113-105 over the Sacramento Kings.

In Vancouver, Laphonso Ellis scored off his own miss with 2.6 seconds remaining, giving the Denver Nuggets an 83-82 victory and spoiling Stu Jackson's debut as Grizzlies coach.

In Portland, Isaiah Rider scored 22 points as the Trail Blazers continued their dominance of the Minnesota Timberwolves, 101-94. Portland leads the series, 28-3.

In Dallas, Jamar Mashburn scored 21 points and Jim Jackson added 20 as the Mavericks stopped a three-game losing streak with a 92-81 victory over the New Jersey Nets.

At Indiana, Elliot Perry scored a season-high 19 points, including an 11-foot fallaway jumper at the buzzer that lifted the Milwaukee Bucks to an 88-86 victory over the Pacers.

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Likud, Labour sign paper on Palestinian final status

TEL AVIV (Agencies) — Deputies from Israel's main governing and opposition parties signed a joint document Sunday laying out what they believe should be Israel's objectives in negotiations on a final status for the Palestinian territories.

The document, which is not binding on Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, was signed by eight deputies, led by Michael Eitan of the ruling Likud bloc and opposition Labour Deputy Yossi Beilin, one of the main architects of the Oslo peace accords.

Mr. Beilin, who is running to succeed Shimon Peres as Labour Party leader, and Mr. Eitan presented their proposals Sunday to Mr. Netanyahu and President Ezer Weizman.

The position paper, drawn up in four months of discussions, recommends a permanent peace settlement which would involve Israeli annexation of most Jewish settlements in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, including much of the Jordan Valley, in exchange for granting broad self-rule to the rest of the Palestinian areas.

The document did not reach agreement on the nature of the new Palestinian entity or its powers, but it did grant Palestinians independence within a broad autonomy short of full sovereignty.

Negotiations on the final status of the West Bank, Gaza Strip and East Jerusalem began symbolically in May last year as called for under the 1995 Oslo interim peace agreement, but they have since been on hold.

As part of a Jan. 15 agreement on Israel's withdrawal from most of the West Bank city of Hebron, both sides agreed to resume the final status talks by late March. The negotiations are to be concluded by May 1999.

The negotiations are due

U.S. 'will accept any decision' reached by parties concerned

AS ISRAEL and the Palestinians traded recriminations over the question of Palestinian statehood, the U.S. consul general for Jerusalem said the United States would accept any decision the two sides reached.

In a front-page interview published Sunday in the Palestinian newspaper Al Ayyam, Edward G. Abington said it was not up to the United States to decide whether there would be a Palestinian state.

"It is an issue the Israelis and Palestinians will work together on," he said. "It's an issue both sides are directly interested in."

Addressing a crowd of high school students in Hebron on Saturday, Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat drew applause when he said, "my loved ones, you are the future. You are the ones who will build this state — centimetre by centimetre — side by side — to build the state of Palestine with Jerusalem as its capital. And whoever does not like it can go and drink the Dead Sea."

"We believe the two sides will reach an understanding," Mr. Abington said. "Arafat clearly announced that he wants an independent Palestinian state and that is what the majority of the Palestinians want," Mr. Abington said. "You hear different opinions from the Israelis because it is a sensitive issue. The United States will accept any decision reached by the two sides."

to resolve such thorny issues as the final borders and powers of the Palestinian entity, the fate of Jewish settlements, future of Jerusalem and the return of Palestinian refugees.

Israeli Infrastructure Minister Ariel Sharon said meanwhile if the Palestinians unilaterally declared an independent state Israel should immediately annex the land such a state would claim as its own.

"If (the Palestinians) declare a Palestinian state, Israel (should) immediately annex all these areas," Mr. Sharon said in broadcast remarks.

Mr. Sharon, staunch supporter of Jewish settlement of the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip, parts of which are now under Palestinian rule, has been sidelined by Mr. Netanyahu during recent negotiations with the Palestinians.

But Mr. Netanyahu, in reaction to Palestinian

President Yasser Arafat's recent declarations he will eventually unilaterally declare an independent state, has also warned he would take severe action against the move which he says would violate peace deals.

Mr. Netanyahu has not elaborated on what the action would be other than to say he has a plan "in the drawer".

Since Israel's handover of 80 per cent of Hebron to a Palestinian rule more than a week ago, Mr. Arafat, in defiance of Israel, has stepped up statements that he will declare a Palestinian state.

The Palestinian National Authority, which is based in Gaza, now controls most of the Gaza Strip and eight West Bank towns handed over by Israel under several agreements signed since 1993. Israel retains control of parts of the West Bank and Gaza known as Area C which includes Jewish settlements and military bases.

Syria says U.S. should be in peace process

DAMASCUS (AFP) — Syria said Sunday the United States was only an Israeli intermediary in the Middle East peace process, and called on it to be an honest broker instead.

The statement, published in the official ruling party newspaper Al Baath, came the day after U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright took office.

Al Baath said: "We are asking the United States to swap the role of intermediary partial to Israel for that of an effective party determined to keep its commitments and promises in the letter of 'guarantees' written by the United States in 1991 to the parties involved in the peace process."

The daily said it was pleased with Mr. Albright's statements Friday that a comprehensive peace was a high priority for U.S. President Bill Clinton, who just began his second term in office.

This "comes as the peace process is in need of every possible international effort in order to emerge from the impasse in which it has been for nearly a year."

"The U.S. administration would benefit from an end to the impasse, it added.

Syrian-Israeli peace talks have been frozen since February last year.

Damascus demands that Israel agree to return the Golan Heights, seized during the 1967 Arab-Israeli war, before peace talks begin.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has said he wanted to resume the talks without any preconditions.

However, he has ruled out a return of the Golan to Syria, but says Damascus is free to bring the issue of territorial compromise to the negotiating table.

Al Baath accused Israel's ruling Likud Party-led coalition of "posing conditions including a latent defect that cancels out commitments made by the previous Israeli government."

Those conditions include Mr. Netanyahu's proposal for a resumption of talks without preconditions, (his) "Lebanon first" proposal and refusal to withdraw from the Golan," the newspaper said.

Assassinated Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, leader of the previous Labour Party-led government, was reported to have agreed to return the Golan to Syria in return for a peace treaty, but no agreement was signed.

But Mr. Netanyahu said he did not consider himself "tied to the verbal commitments given by the previous government on a withdrawal from the Golan," an Israeli official said.

The "Lebanon first" proposal concerned

Khaddam, Sharaa in Gulf mission on peace process

SYRIAN Vice President Abdul Halim Khaddam and Foreign Minister Farouk Al Sharaa arrived here Sunday for previously unannounced talks with Saudi officials about the Arab-Israeli peace process.

Mr. Sharaa told AFP he was carrying a message from Syrian President Hafez Al Assad for King Fahd and said the two were on the first leg of a tour of the six Gulf Arab countries and Yemen.

"We have to pass on messages from President Assad to the leaders of these countries, focusing on the situation in the region and especially on the future of the peace process," Mr. Sharaa said.

Mr. Sharaa said he and Mr. Khaddam were to meet King Fahd later Sunday before leaving Monday for Kuwait and then on to the United Arab Emirates, Oman, Bahrain, Qatar and Yemen.

Meanwhile, Egyptian Foreign Minister Amr Musa left Saudi Arabia Sunday following talks with Saudi officials about the Arab-Israeli peace process and the violence in Sudan and Algeria.

Mr. Musa said he gave King Fahd "a message from President Hosni Mubarak about the situation in the Arab World and especially developments in the peace process, especially the next phase" of Arab-Israeli talks.

concluding a peace with Lebanon first but Lebanon and Syria have both insisted on a comprehensive deal involving both countries.

Syria, which has 35,000 troops stationed in Lebanon, is the main power broker there.

A senior Israeli foreign ministry official said Friday that Israel and Syria had been exchanging documents on a formula for resuming peace talks but have not succeeded in reaching an agreement to return to the negotiating table.

"We have also shown our desire to return to the negotiations based on the Madrid conference (in March 1991) and Security Council Resolution 242," which calls for Israel's withdrawal from occupied Arab territories.

But the official said Syria has responded by imposing demands that Israel considers unacceptable.

Orthodox Jews berate American reform rabbis

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AP) — Ultra-Orthodox Jews shouted insults Sunday at visiting U.S. reform Jews who prayed at the Western Wall with men and women standing together in violation of orthodox Jewish custom.

"You women are impure and evil spirits," shouted one ultra-orthodox Jew after the men and women reform rabbis prayed in the plaza about 50 metres from the wall.

Orthodox men at the scene shouted that women could not be rabbis. "You have no brains," objected one man. "You are disgusting," shouted three young ultra-orthodox seminary students, who wore black coats and trilby hats.

Border police quickly escorted the orthodox students away from the women rabbis. One of the students began screaming and lay face down on the ground until he was carried off by his friends.

In accordance with orthodox tradition, women are permitted to pray at the wall but are separated from the men by a barrier.

The reform women, in contradiction of orthodox practice, wore prayer shawls, phylacteries on their right arm

and forehead, and skull caps.

"These people desecrate God's holy name," said Isaac, an ultra-orthodox Jew from Spring Valley, New York, who refused to give his full name. "They violate the laws of the Torah here at Judaism's holiest site, and they cause such pain to devout Jews that they sometimes even drive them to violence."

Reform delegation leader, Rabbi Ami Hirsch, 38, of New York said: "We are holding this egalitarian service to demonstrate for religious pluralism, for the right of all Jews to practice their religion according to their lights."

He said the group planned to meet Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and warn him against giving in to pressure from the ultra-orthodox to pass legislation which would disqualify conversions to Judaism conducted by conservative and reform rabbis outside Israel.

Orthodox rabbis currently control all conversions in Israel but non-orthodox conversions abroad are recognised by the state.



An ultra-orthodox Jew lies on the ground as others look on, at the Western Wall in the Old City of Jerusalem on Sunday, in protest after some 50 Reform Jews, men and women, held prayers together at the site against the tradition of segregation in prayers (AFP photo)

Hamas assails Arafat nomination

CAIRO (Agencies) — The Islamic Resistance movement (Hamas) on Sunday criticised a decision by Palestinian President Yasser Arafat to appoint a Muslim fundamentalist to his cabinet as a political ploy.

"In a new ploy to improve his deteriorating position and cover up his political defeats ... Arafat decided to name Sheikh Talal Sadr to his cabinet," Hamas said in a statement received in Cairo.

"Sheikh Sadr's participation will not be able to hide for long Arafat's dictatorship," Hamas said.

Sheikh Sadr's who leads a local Muslim association in the West Bank, was expelled to Lebanon by Israel in 1992 for his activities with Hamas, which has claimed responsibility for numerous attacks against the Jewish state.

Hamas accused Mr. Arafat of seeking to "obtain the support of Islamic groups for his policy of surrender" through the appointment of Sheikh Sadr.

It also voiced surprise at Sheikh Sadr's acceptance of the post of minister of youth and sports "at a time when the Palestinian (National) Authority still holds dozens of members of the Islamic movement."

Sheikh Sadr took the oath of office before the Palestinian cabinet during its weekly meeting on Friday.

Israelis fire tear-gas

Israeli soldiers fired tear-gas on Sunday at several hundred Palestinian villagers protesting the uprooting of 500 olive trees.

Dozens of villagers were treated for tear-gas inhalation.

According to Palestinian witnesses, the soldiers fired in the air and then used tear-gas to disperse the demonstrators in the West Bank town of Toura, 20 kilometres west of Jenin.

Israel says the land is "state" land and the growers are trespassing.

No arrests were made and no serious injuries were reported.

Russia, in apparent bid to shore up role, invites Netanyahu and Arafat

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — In an attempt to reassert its weight as a co-sponsor of the Mideast peace process, Russia has invited Middle East leaders to hold talks in Moscow, news agencies reported.

The Jordan News Agency, Petra, said that Russia's Deputy Foreign Minister Viktor Posuvalyuk was quoted by Radio Israel as informing Israeli Foreign Minister David Levy of the invitations forwarded by the Russian government.

According to Petra, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Palestinian President Yasser Arafat, Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri and Syrian Foreign Minister Farouk Sharaa were invited to Moscow by the Russian government.

Demonstrating the second world power's determination to play a greater role in the Arab-Israeli peace process, Mr. Posuvalyuk described the projected Moscow meeting as "a tool to reactivate the peace process on all tracks" and

proof of his country's "readiness to continue the multilateral phase of peace negotiations." Petra reported.

International news agencies said that, before reaching Israel, Mr. Posuvalyuk held a Saturday meeting in Amman with Russian ambassadors to different countries of the region to discuss Russia's role in the Mideast peace process.

The Russian embassy in Amman confirmed that the meeting took place but declined to issue any statement and refused to disclose any information regarding either participants or issues tackled in the meeting.

A joint statement issued Thursday by three Jordanian leftist parties saluted Moscow's initiative and called for an increased role for the Russian government in the multilateral phase of the peace process.

The Jordanian People's Democratic Party (Hashd), the Jordanian Democratic Popular Unity Party and the National Labour Party declared in the statement their "great hope that (Russia) will resume its role as a sponsor of a just and equal peace."

After Jordan and Israel, Mr. Posuvalyuk is scheduled to visit Syria, the Interfax news agency reported Sunday.

Interfax quoted Mr. Posuvalyuk, upon his departure for his Middle East tour, as saying that he was pleased by the recent Israeli-Palestinian agreement on Hebron but was concerned with the "evident stagnation" in Israel's talks with Lebanon and Syria.

Reiterating his government's determination to achieve a "comprehensive peace," Mr. Posuvalyuk stated that "there must be more parallel movement in the Palestinian and Syrian-Lebanese tracks because progress in one direction and stagnation in the other causes a negative reaction."

Though the exact date of the proposed Moscow summit is not yet known, Russia's Foreign Ministry spokesman Vladimir Andreyev was quoted by international news agencies on Friday as saying that the meeting could take place "within the next month or two."

Arafat fires French advisor to Palestinian pension fund

PARIS (R) — Palestinian President Yasser Arafat has barred a French economic adviser, Gabriel Banon, from handling a Palestinian pension fund, according to documents obtained by Reuters.

In a Dec. 21 letter, Mr. Arafat told the New York bank which holds part of the pension fund that Mr. Banon and his consultancy firm no longer represented the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) and instructed the bank to stop dealing with him.

"Mr. Gabriel Banon and/or Strategic and Development Policies Advisor (SDPA) do no longer represent the Palestinian National Authority in its dealing with your firm," Mr. Arafat wrote to Morgan Stanley Asset Management, confirming a Nov. 4 letter from Palestinian Justice Minister Fathi Abu Meddein.

Mr. Arafat's office confirmed the authenticity of the letter which named an Israeli-Swiss businessman, Arie Gilon, chairman of Zurich-based Belesa Asset Management, as Mr. Banon's successor. Mr. Gilon confirmed to Reuters that he had been appointed on Nov. 24.

Senior Palestinian officials said Mr. Arafat had picked Jewish businessmen with Israeli ties because he believed they would have a better chance of persuading Israel to hand over the money deducted from Palestinian

employees of the administration during the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza since 1967.

Last July, Mr. Arafat paid \$250,000 out of the fund to an account controlled by the Moroccan-born businessman at Banque Monod in Paris.

Mr. Banon, who still describes himself as Mr. Arafat's officially appointed economic adviser, told Reuters the money was transferred to cover his expenses.

He said he had originally sought \$450,000 but had told Mr. Arafat last month he would waive the remaining \$200,000 in the light of the problems it had caused for him.

"If you divide \$250,000 by the 36 months I worked on the pension fund, it comes to less than \$7,000 a month. That doesn't even pay my office rent," Mr. Banon said.

He said he had advised Mr. Arafat to transfer the entire pension fund to the Paris bank to avoid U.S. taxation, since at that time the United States would not grant the PNA an exemption it gives to sovereign states.

Mr. Abu Meddein, who is chairman of the pension fund, travelled to Paris in September and halted that transfer.

After weeks of argument, he convinced Mr. Arafat to remove Mr. Banon from dealing with the fund.

"We decided to put him aside because his ideas did not coincide with our ideas," Mr. Abu Meddein told Reuters in Gaza. "The \$250,000 he received were his fees."

Another businessman with ties to Mr. Arafat, Pierre Rizk, former intelligence chief of the Lebanese Forces militia, has since sued Mr. Banon in a Paris court for a cut of the proceeds from the pension fund.

In an interview with Reuters, Mr. Banon said: "My mission on the pension fund is drawing to an end. Other missions are continuing." He displayed a file of letters of mission signed by Mr. Arafat in 1994 and 1995.

The Palestinian leader first took on Mr. Banon, a French citizen with U.S. residence, in December 1993, shortly after the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) signed a peace agreement with Israel negotiated in Oslo.

Mr. Arafat did not respond to repeated requests from Reuters for comment on Mr. Banon's role, although his office confirmed he had signed the letter barring Mr. Banon from the pension fund.

PLO officials said Mr. Arafat's original aim had been to attract foreign investment through an intermediary he believed enjoyed the confidence both of the Israelis and the international business community.

China solves mystery of dwarf village

BEIJING (R) — Residents of a village of dwarfs in central China can put an end to a life of looking up at the world. Scientists have figured out why Huilong village in central Sichuan province has produced so many dwarfs, a discovery that will allow their children to walk tall.

Xinhua news agency said. Excessive mercury levels in the drinking water was identified as the reason why about 60 villagers are dwarfs. Ten of them are less than one metre tall. No new cases of dwarfism have been reported since the village was assured a supply of pollution-free drinking water, it said without saying when the clean water was provided.

Spanish villagers hurl goat from tower at fiesta

MANGANESES DE LA POLVOROSA, Spain (R) — Residents of a northern Spanish village defied protests from animal rights activists and hurled a goat from the top of a church tower in an annual ritual to honour their patron saint.

Amid cheers and heckling, young villagers paraded the goat through the streets before taking it to the church and throwing it out of the belfry as part of the "jump of the goat" fiesta. Hundreds of people, many in fancy dress, were in the central square to take part in the revelry and witness the ritual. The goat survived the fall, caught in a canvas sheet held open by villagers below. But animal rights activists were still horrified at the ritual in the remote village of 1,000 people. The ritual was banned in 1992 by the governor of Zamora province, but villagers reacted so violently when police tried to stop it that the authorities were forced to rethink the ban.

Bird plunges Senegal into darkness

DAKAR (R) — A sparrow hawk plunged Senegal into darkness for four hours after short-circuiting the national electricity grid, officials said. The incident began after dusk when the bird collided with one high tension power line causing it to short against another. This resulted in an abrupt short circuit causing a total blackout throughout the country.

Adiouma Dione, a senior official of the state power company, Senelec, told Reuters. He said the incident occurred at the Cap de Biches power plant that produces about 80 per cent of Senegal's electricity. A protective mechanism automatically shut down the other two power stations at Saint Louis and Koldaack, he said. The sparrow hawk perished.

Hundreds trapped on Canadian ice floe

TORONTO (R) — Shifting ice trapped at least 500 fishermen and snowmobilers on a lake about 70 kilometres north of Toronto, but no injuries were immediately reported. The Canadian forces and three police forces sent in helicopters, boats and emergency crews to rescue them. An 11-kilometre-long crack about 30 metres wide stranded the people on Lake Simcoe along with their fishing huts and vehicles, police said. The crack broke during a fishing derby, isolating at least 500 people at one end of the lake. "Every rescue service around is involved," said one officer.

French company offers two-wheel taxis

PARIS (R) — A Paris taxi company is taking harried business people on motorcycles to beat the French capital's rush-hour traffic jams. "There is no other way of being sure of getting to an appointment on time," Jean-Christophe Saliou, head of the SP2 taxi company, told TPI television. The motorcycle drivers carry extra leather jackets and helmets for customers to wear over business suits.

France sells medicines

French companies sell medicines to other countries. The French government has been accused of selling medicines to other countries. The French government has been accused of selling medicines to other countries. The French government has been accused of selling medicines to other countries.

Arafat declaring final status

PNA assails Israeli tightening its grip

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